



Photo

Ballance.

BACINO DI S. MARCO
(The Basin of St. Mark)

Characteristic gondola in motion, with Punta della Salute in background.

THINGS SEEN IN VENICE

BY

LONSDALE RAGG, B.D. (Oxon)

PREBENDARY OF BUCKDEN IN LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

AUTHOR OF "DANTE AND HIS ITALY"

AND

LAURA M. RAGG

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMEN ARTISTS OF BOLOGNA"

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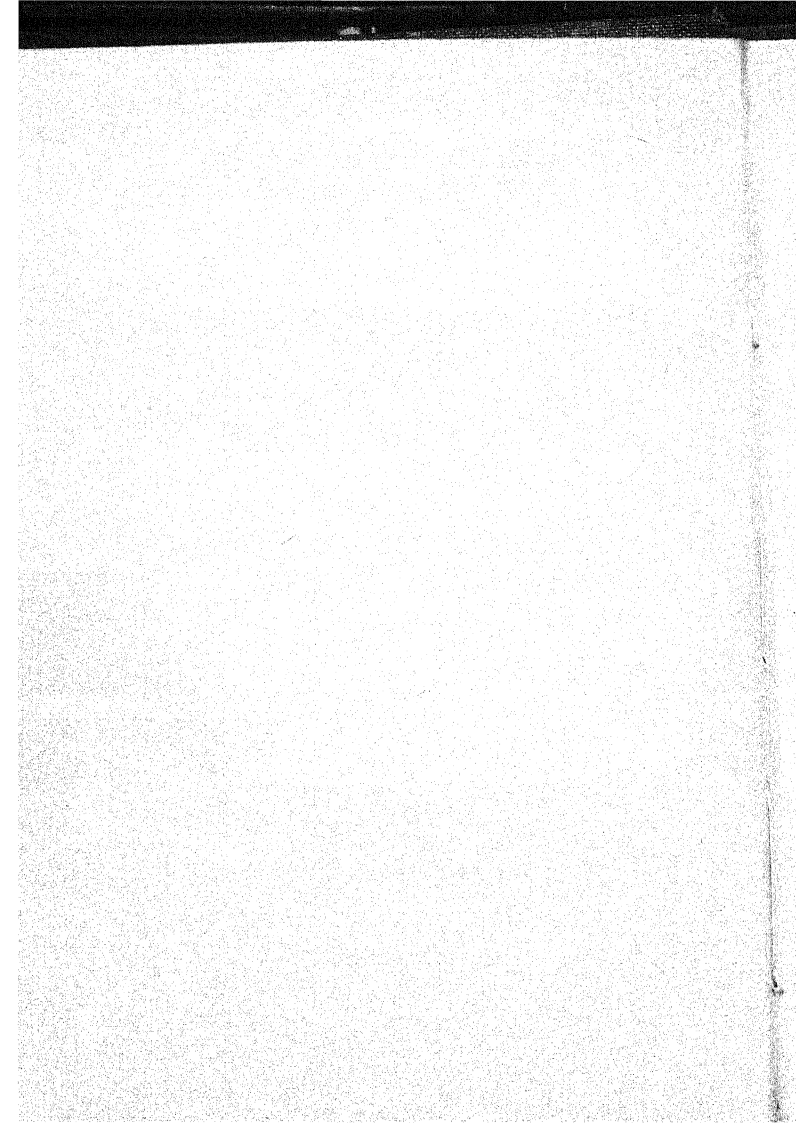
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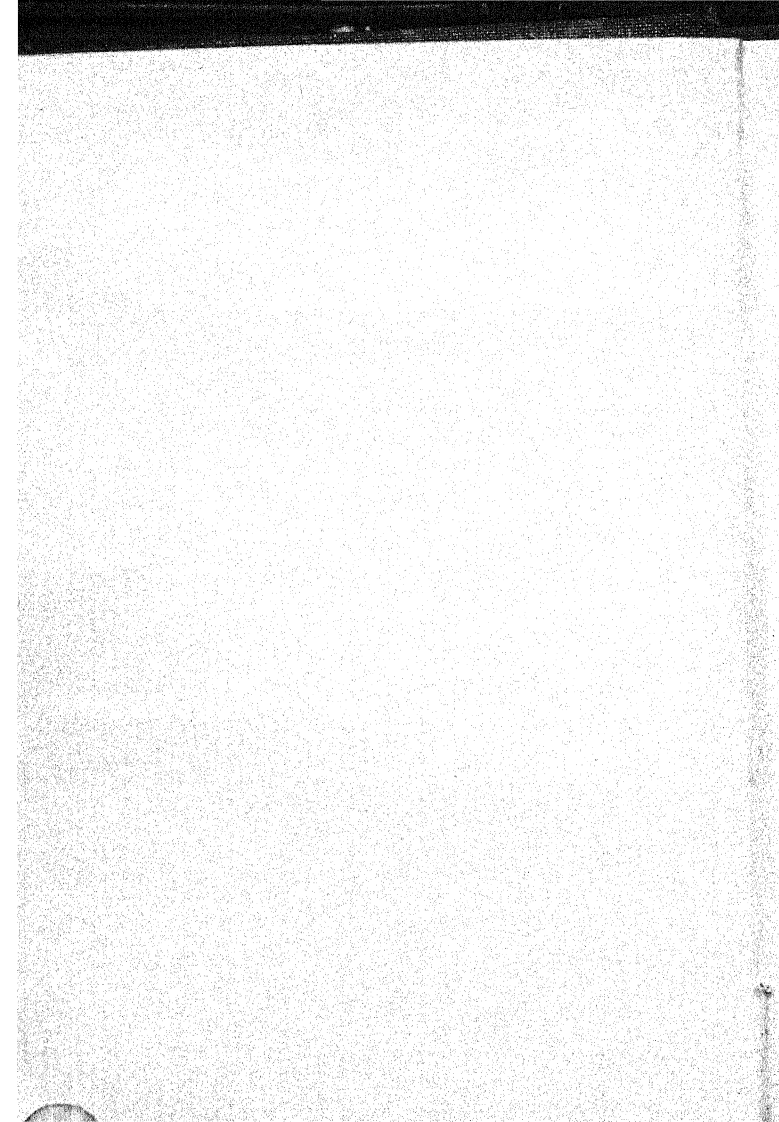
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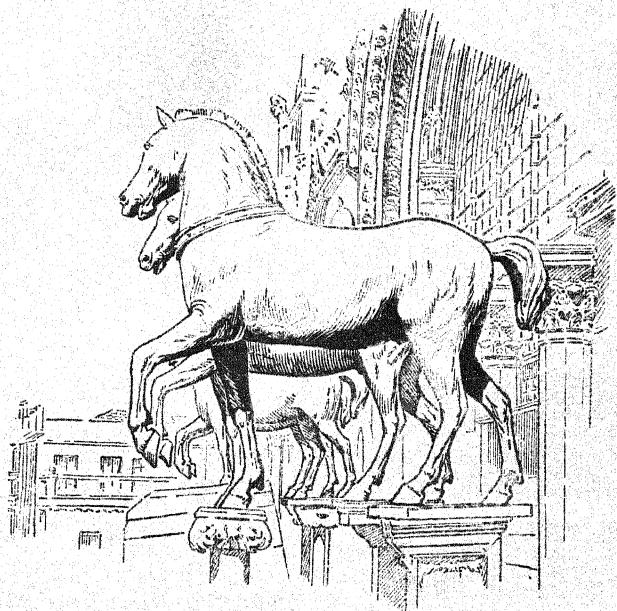
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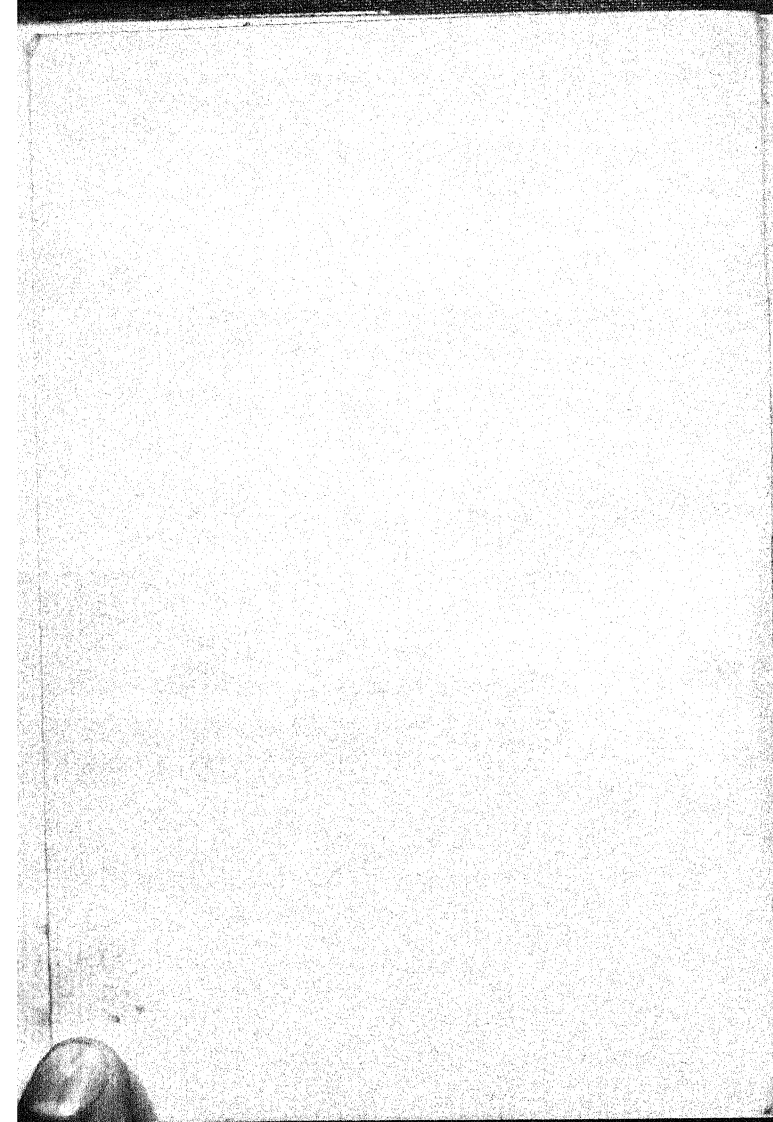
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W



THE BRONZE HORSES OF ST. MARK



Things Seen in Venice

CHAPTER I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

TO be obliged to enter a stately edifice by its back-door is an unfortunate circumstance destructive of any just conception of its proportions, grandeur, and charm. Yet this obligation is laid, not only on every pedestrian visitor who calls on the dwellers in Venetian palaces, but on every modern traveller brought by railway to the City of the Lagoons.

Its visitors of old time were more fortunate. They approached this "*Città nobilissima e singolare*" by ways which enabled them to taste its quality from afar. They saw its distant campanili as they sailed across the Adriatic from Trieste; or they came, like John Evelyn in 1645, by Brondolo and Chioggia,

Things Seen in Venice

“over against Malamocco, the chief port and anchorage where our English merchantmen lie that trade with Venice”; and here, entering the lagoon, they slipped into the Bacino di S. Marco, the Campanile beckoning them on, till their progress was arrested by the Custom House, which looks seaward from the sharp point of Dorsoduro. Or, like Shakespeare's Portia, they might come from Padua, travelling by barge along the Brenta through the level green water-meadows to Fusina, and there, embarking on the “common ferry which trades to Venice,” they approached the city by the broad Giudecca Channel. Or, again, if they had crossed the Alps by the Brenner Pass, they left their carriages and all the toils and fatigues of travel at Mestre, and there entered a gondola, the reviving salt breeze and the masses of heaving seaweed proclaiming the vicinity of the Adriatic. Then they rowed across the Lagoon, slowly nearing the city, which lay like a big lotus-leaf on its bosom; not surrounded, like other medieval towns, by defences of masonry, but having these shining expanses of water alike for road and rampart. And when the low shore of the

First Impressions

mainland behind them had become a mere wavering, neutral-tinted line, the boat swept into the Canal of Cannareggio, and then past the Church of San Geremia, into the Grand Canal, the broadest and most stately street in Europe.

Yet what the modern traveller loses in æsthetic satisfaction he gains in sensations of astonishment. No previous preparation, descriptive or photographic, can seriously diminish the delightful thrill experienced by the new-comer to Venice as he leaves the railway platform and emerges on the station quay overlooking the Grand Canal.

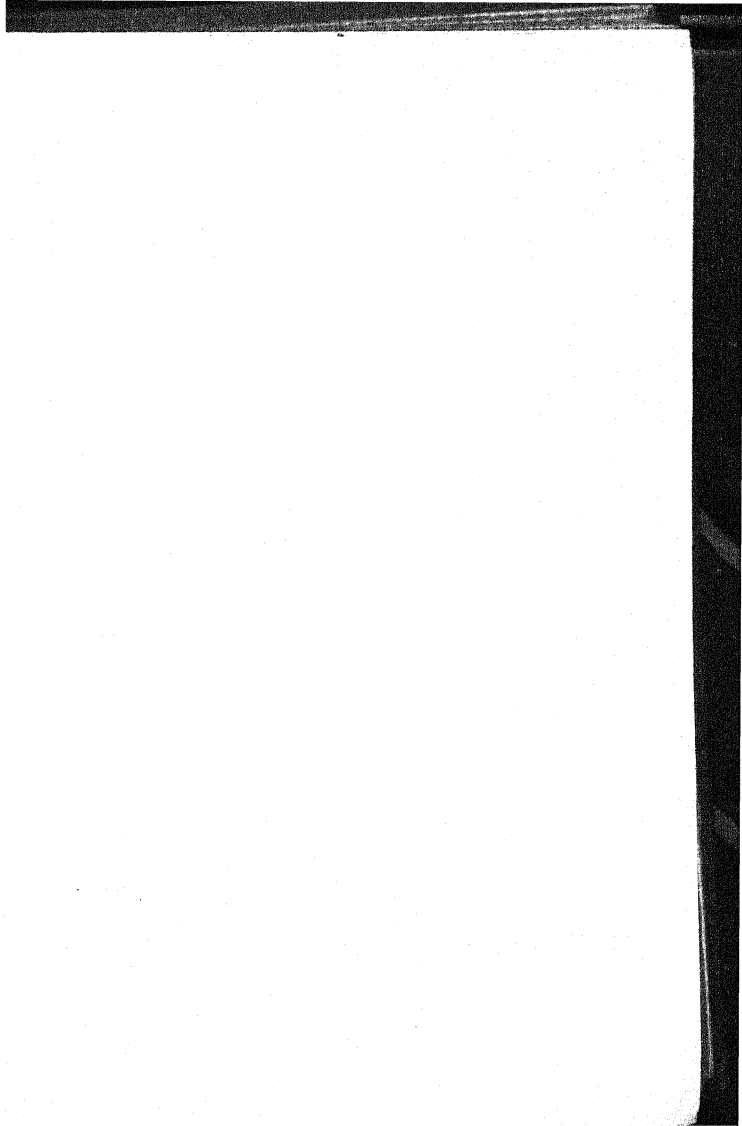
There, by the broad flight of water-steps, the cabs of Venice, the hired gondolas, are waiting in a black mass for the arrival of the express trains. As soon as the first luggage-laden figure appears on the quay, the mass becomes agitated. The air is rent with cries: the offering, "Gondola! gondola!" from the water; from the shore the imperative, "Poppe! poppe!" (Boatman!) of blue-vested *facchini*, anxious to secure a good boat for the *signori* who have tipped them well. Or the Christian

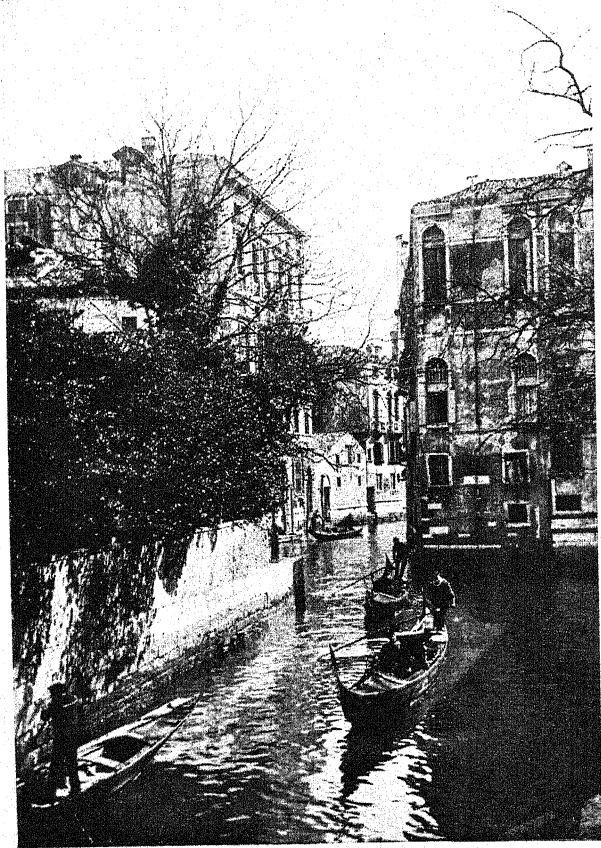
Things Seen in Venice

name of some private gondolier—"Francesco!" "Luigi!" "Pietro!" or what not—is shouted; and a reassuring "Eccomi, Signorina!" "Pronto, Signore!" comes from some stalwart standing form, who presently, with marvellous dexterity, will manage to extricate his gondola from the crowd, avoid the wash of a steamer making for the station pontoon to the left, and draw up at some spot on the outskirts of confusion.

Many of the best hotels now send a steam-launch as "station bus" to meet expected guests. This is an advantage to the traveller who is going for the bathing season straight out to the Lido; otherwise time seems dearly gained at the expense of the restful motion of the old-fashioned gondola, one of the most characteristic and delicious features of life in the Lagoons. To arrive uncertain of one's destination—and without the power to conceal the fact beneath a mask of assumed decision—is to be the victim of the knot of hotel porters who command the station exit, chanting the names of their houses, prepared to pounce like spiders on any vacillating fly.

Happy is the man who has come to stay in





Topical Press,

A PICTURESQUE CORNER.

Rio S. Stin.

First Impressions

Venice with some of its residents, and is met on arrival by his host's private gondola, manned by two gondoliers. Happier still is he if his friends refrain from coming to welcome him in person. To feel oneself propelled with the easy speed of the double-oar, to observe without fully comprehending, to yield oneself silently to wholly new sensations—this is the way to enjoy to the full the luxury of arrival.

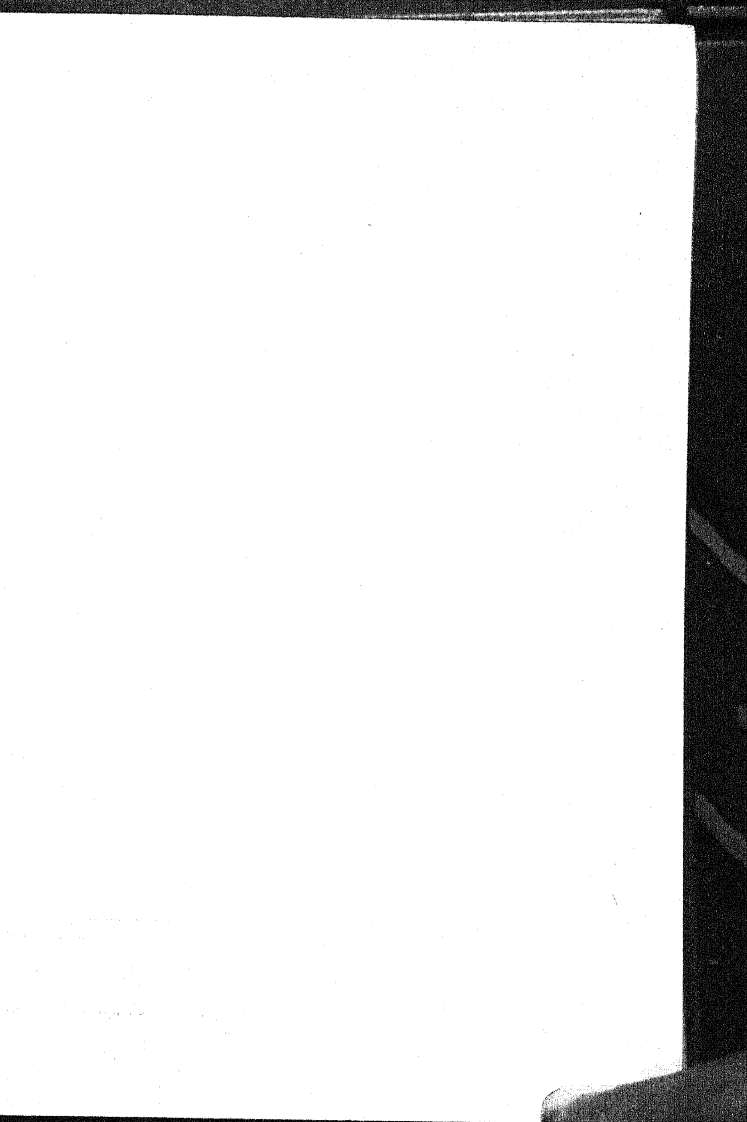
Travellers who have crossed the Alps often come by an express train from Milan, which reaches Venice near midnight; those who have crossed the Apennines often enter with the dawn. Both hours are favourable to striking first impressions.

As the night train leaves the station at Mestre and steams across the bridge built by the Austrians to link their conquest with the mainland, the lights of Venice gleam brightly in the midst of a plain of dark water; and the unique situation of the City of Refuge is realized more vividly than when the eye is dazzled by sunlight and distracted by the unending variations of cloud and reflection. Then when the restful gondola is reached, and the traveller begins to

Things Seen in Venice

move along the waterway, he is penetrated by the novelty of its silence. In the darkness he strains his ears rather than his eyes, and the only sounds which meet them are the rhythmical dip of the oar, the lapping of the tide against marble steps, the weirdly melodious cry of the gondolier sent forth in warning as he rounds a corner or overtakes another boat.

Residents in Venice know that the stillness is fallacious. Experience quickly teaches that human voices echo through the silence made by the absence of traffic; that narrow foot-passages and waterways are funnels up which sounds of steps or of revellers' songs ascend to upper windows; that Italians seem able to reduce the hours of sleep to a minimum; that when wine-shops disgorge their cheerful occupants vivacious discussion will continue on the nearest bridge; that solitary wayfarers are apt to enliven a night tramp with reproductions—*allegro* and *con brio*—of the popular operatic tune; and, finally, that certain gondoliers are bound by the laws of the Municipio to be on duty all night at the *traghetti* (ferries), and are determined that some of the inhabitants





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A SIDE-CANAL, RIO S. TROVASO.

Where it debouches into the Grand Canal, with Palazzo Contarini degli Sorigni
on the right.

First Impressions

of the surrounding houses shall share their vigil.

But the traveller is still ignorant of these facts, though he may discover some of them all too soon, when he retires weary to his couch. For the moment this quiet water transit possesses him—this arrival, so unlike the drive from the station in any other city, seaport, or country village. He plunges wondering into dim side-canal, scarcely able to discern the outline of the masonry through the shadow of which he passes, all that is mean and ugly hidden by the darkness, and mystery adding allurements to beauty half revealed.

Then he emerges again into the moonlight space of the Grand Canal, with its bordering of stately palaces. Some are shuttered and lightless, and the gondola of the house, *sparecchiata*—despoiled of all but its frame—heaves fastened to its *pali*—the tall posts before the door. Others have no gondola, while a single light is burning in the water-entrance—indications that the owners are still abroad and are expected home anon. Or, again, there is a long row of lighted windows from which issue gusts of laughter,

Things Seen in Venice

merriment, and music, while below a black group of gondolas lies awaiting the close of an evening reception.

Then, if the traveller is bound for one of the hotels near St. Mark's, there will intervene another short cut, another sudden plunge into a side-canal, till finally he emerges into a great stretch of scintillating, moon-swept water, giving back the lights of the Piazzetta and widening seaward to the shimmering Lagoon.

But if the traveller come when the shadows are slipping downwards from the palaces, like a discarded garment sliding to the feet, and the expanse of Lagoon and wide channel are growing grey and faintly luminous, he will find a quieter station, a less confused embarkation, and a more refreshing breeze than at any other hour. Then, too, he will have glimpses of the city's provisioning—invisible to later risers—of barges bearing milk from the mainland, of boats laden with market-garden produce, of a bustle, accompanied by the sound of many voices, about the Rialto and the Fish Market. Then, too, if the weather favour him, he will see two sights

First Impressions

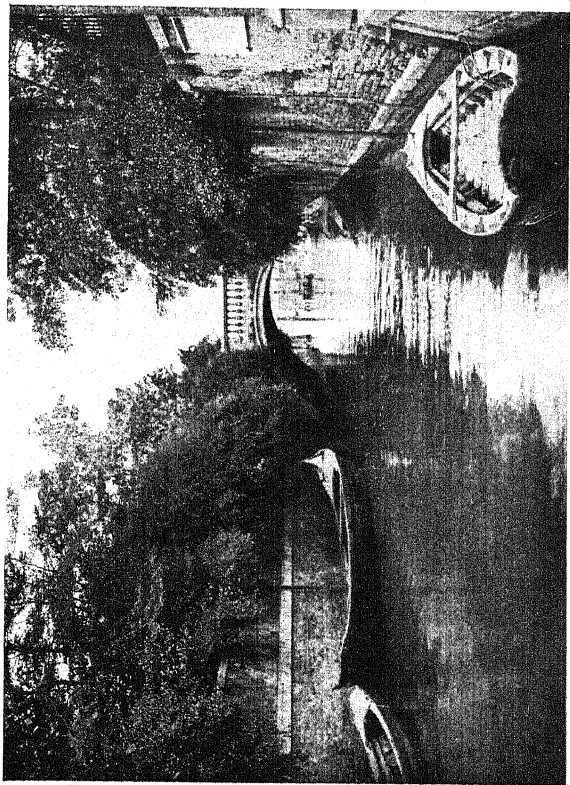
of magical loveliness: looking seawards, the dome of the church of the Madonna della Salute, with all its delicate barocco twirls and spirals, "a wondrous brittle dome of wizardry," outlined against a sky whose pale, intensifying light is veiled in a transparent pearly haze; looking landwards, the whole line of the Alps, white-crested with a sprinkling of newly-fallen snow, or gleaming in silver and pale purple through the tremulous white of a summer dawn. The sunset may show them again, revealing more clearly to the west the mountains above Vicenza; but never do they look so ethereal, so dream-like, as in the pure light of early morning.

The medal, like every other made of earthly metal, has its reverse. After the delicious row from the station comes the reckoning—often a disagreeable awakening from a pleasant dream. The English or American visitor is nowadays regarded as the rightful prey of the gondolier, whom he has spoilt by misplaced generosity, and whom he sometimes irritates by unjust suspicion. The course from the station to the fashionable hotels is a long one, and the

Things Seen in Venice

foreigner's luggage is often weighty. Sometimes the gondolier is outrageous in his demands; sometimes the *forestieri* are unreasonable in their withholdings. When a wrangle ensues the latter are at a disadvantage, for even should they understand and speak Italian, they are likely to be worsted when the excited Venetian slips into his own dialect. The writer remembers how, not long ago, two young English ladies, going to a *pension* not on a canal, besought the gondolier to carry their trunks from the landing-place to the door of their lodging. The man refused to do so unless he were paid a preposterous extra fee. It was late, and the frightened girls were about to capitulate, when two English gentlemen came to the *traghetto*. Overhearing the altercation, they dismissed the gondolier with a threat of report to the *vigili* (police), and themselves carried their compatriots' trunks to the *pension* entrance.

Again, if a moonlight night on the Lagoons holds a charm unknown to the mainland; if the dawn seems more magical, the midday sunshine more effulgent—it cannot be denied that a wet

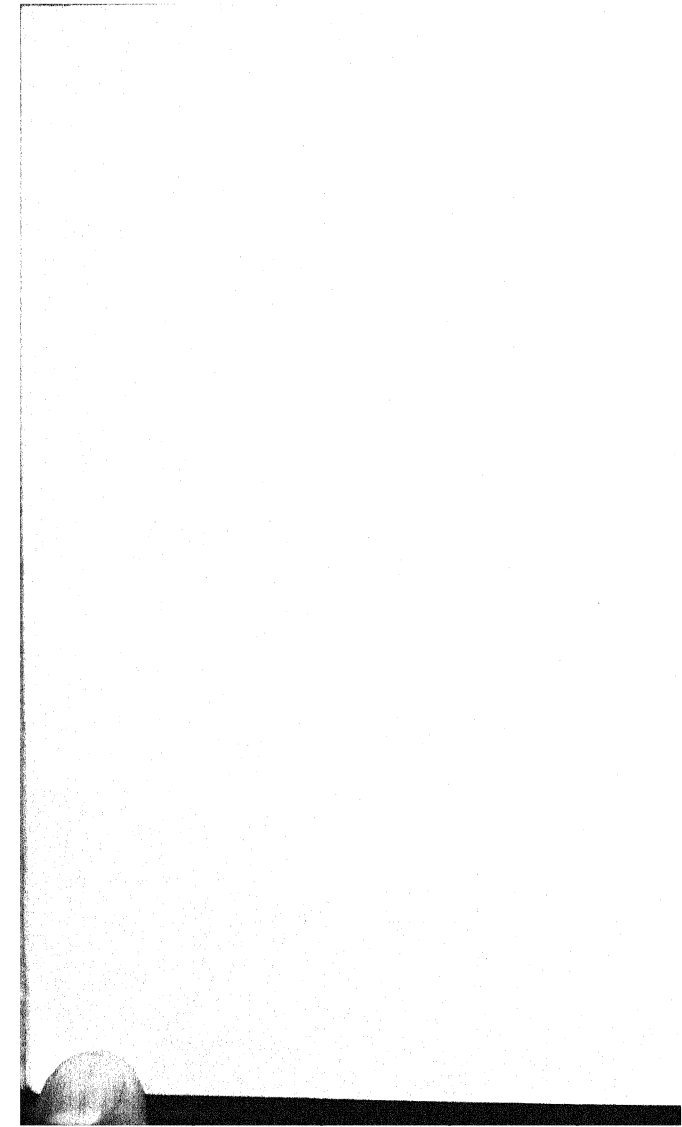


Ballanche

A QUIET SPOT.

Showing the bridge which leads to the Public Gardens.

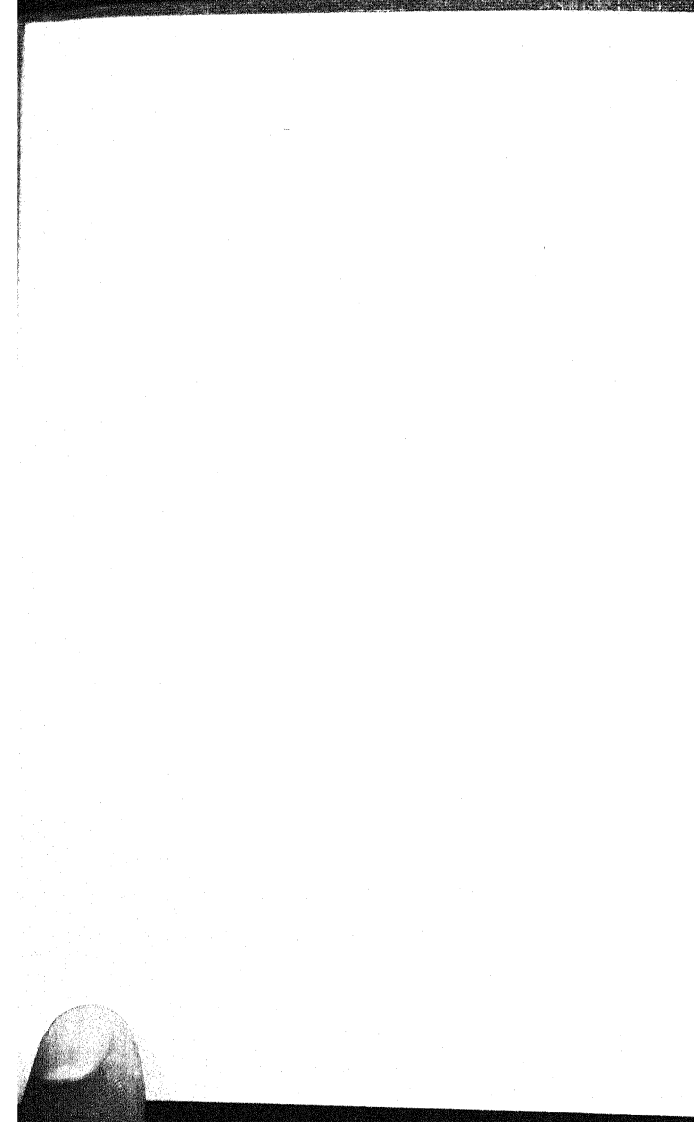
St. Moritz.



First Impressions

day is drearier and more uncomfortable in Venice than in any other European city. There are days when we would thankfully exchange the steamer for a rattling bus, and the noiseless gondola for a snorting taxi-cab; when all traffic is dislocated by fog or wind; when even the shelter of a *felze*—the hearse-like hood of the gondola—is denied to us, and it is an adventure to cross the Grand Canal near its mouth, and impossible to steer across the channel of the Giudecca. In such weather an arrival at night is no delicious dream, but a veritable nightmare. No gondolas are waiting at the station stairs, and the traveller stands dripping and impatient, while a shivering *facchino* shouts "Poppe!" till he is hoarse.

If the wind is strong and gusty, it may be necessary to employ a second rower—*secondo remo*—to avoid the wider canals as far as possible, and to study carefully both wind and tide. In very wild weather it is safer to leave one's heavy luggage at the station, and go on board one of the steamers—*vaporetti*—which ply from early dawn to midnight up and down the Grand Canal, calling at various points.



CHAPTER II

THE GRAND CANAL

IF Venice is unique as a city, surely there is nothing even in Venice more interesting and beautiful than the Grand Canal—"Il Canalazzo," as the natives call it. This is the Ringstrasse, the Unter den Linden of Venice; its Piccadilly and Regent Circus, and I know not what else, in one.

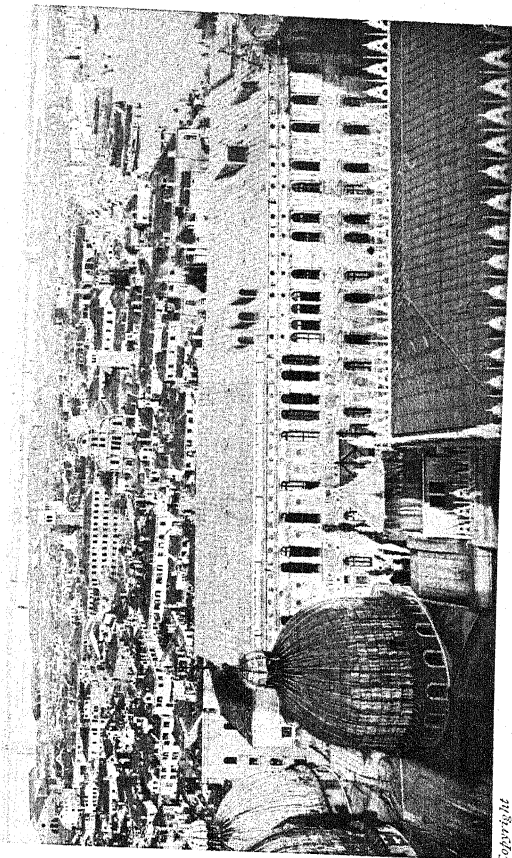
The beautiful sweep of its curves, combined with the historic interest and dignity of its buildings, recalls, perhaps more than anything else, the immortal "High" at Oxford. But the comparison is, after all, but a poor one. If by an inconceivable misfortune the Grand Canal should at some future date be called to suffer as some of its humbler colleagues suffered under the Austrian régime, and be drained and filled up with rubble and solid paving and converted into a street—a "Rio Terrà," as the Venetians

Things Seen in Venice

would say—it would still be far and away the most glorious street in Europe.

As it is, the quaint and variegated beauty of its palaces, where the twelfth, the fourteenth, and the eighteenth century jostle one another in friendly and harmonious juxtaposition, gains indefinitely from the proximity of the water. Here, in rare moments of stillness, the whole architectural line is reflected ; while the different degrees of disturbance caused by light breeze or passing gondola have each its sequence of fantastically broken reflection to enhance the glow of the picture.

Even the wash of the penny steamer—the “Tram,” as the natives call it, by a quaint metaphor—or of the motor-launch (whose “Toot ! toot !” does its best to assimilate the noise of Venetian traffic to that of other towns) cannot entirely destroy the effect, on a bright sunny day. The general result upon the eye is that of a dark green palette on which the colours of the architectural harmony above are fantastically mixed. When a steamer or motor-launch passes, the mixture is at its weirdest . . . and you see more of the palette !



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LOOKING EASTWARDS FROM THE CAMPANILE.

View from the top of the Campanile: the Doge's Palace and domes of St. Mark's in the foreground.



The Grand Canal

From the steps of the railway-station quay one sees the Canalazzo winding to the right hand and to the left. If we follow it to the right we soon reach its western end, by turning sharp to the right again past the purlieus of the goods station, and under a bridge, and so into the north-western lagoon near the line of the railway viaduct which stretches in an apparently endless series of arches towards the mainland. The left bank of the Grand Canal, as we move in this direction, is flanked by buildings quaintly picturesque, but for the most part mean and squalid, relieved by the green patch of the Papadopoli Garden. Adjoining this is a humble edifice interesting to Englishmen as the British Sailors' Institute. The right bank is monopolized by the offices, sheds, and warehouses pertaining to the railway terminus.

If, however, we would see the glories of the Canalazzo, we must move eastward, turning to the left as we leave the station steps, under the useful but hideous iron bridge. It is rather north of east that we shall move at first, then due east, then south beneath the famous Rialto Bridge, then south with a touch of west for a

Things Seen in Venice

longish spell, till by the great Foscari Palace we sweep round to the south-east and finally, east, with the slightest deflection northwards past the long line of hotels, to the Piazzetta, the Doge's Palace, and the sunny Riva degli Schiavona. "Il Canalazzo Serpentezzia," the canal behaves like a twisted serpent, or a reversed letter "S." This characteristic adds greatly to its beauty, for it modulates at different points the lines and the direction of light and shade ; but it muddles the stranger dreadfully as to the points of the compass, and distorts most inconveniently his impression of the topography of the city. It also makes the "housing problem" very confusing for the ambitious Anglo-Saxon who wishes to establish himself on the sunny side of the Grand Canal.

Following the Canal down from the station towards the Rialto, the buildings on which the eye rests to the right are, for the first reach, picturesque rather than important. The motley line includes not a little architecture that would well repay attention, but nothing that forces itself upon our notice, except the classical façade and disproportionate green dome of the

The Grand Canal

eighteenth-century church of S. Simeone Piccolo, till we reach the fine Byzantine twelfth-century building which is now the civic museum—a museum, by the way, worth more attention than it usually receives from English visitors.

Meanwhile the left-hand side of the Canal has been full of interest. Longhena's over-ornate church of the Scalzi (Barefoot Friars), adjoining the station, is quickly followed by the beautifully heterogeneous group of S. Geremia, its lofty thirteenth-century campanile, with a modern top, standing sentry over an eighteenth-century church, and flanked by the handsome seventeenth-century Labbia Palace.

This group, which marks the entrance to the Canareggio—the old outlet towards Mestre and the mainland ere the railway viaduct was built—is typical of much that we shall see. Typical is the dedication of the church: the Venetians had a fondness* for Old Testament saints—"St. Jeremiah" here has for his colleagues "St. Job" (San Giobbe), near by, and "St. Moses" (San Moisè) and "St. Samuel" in

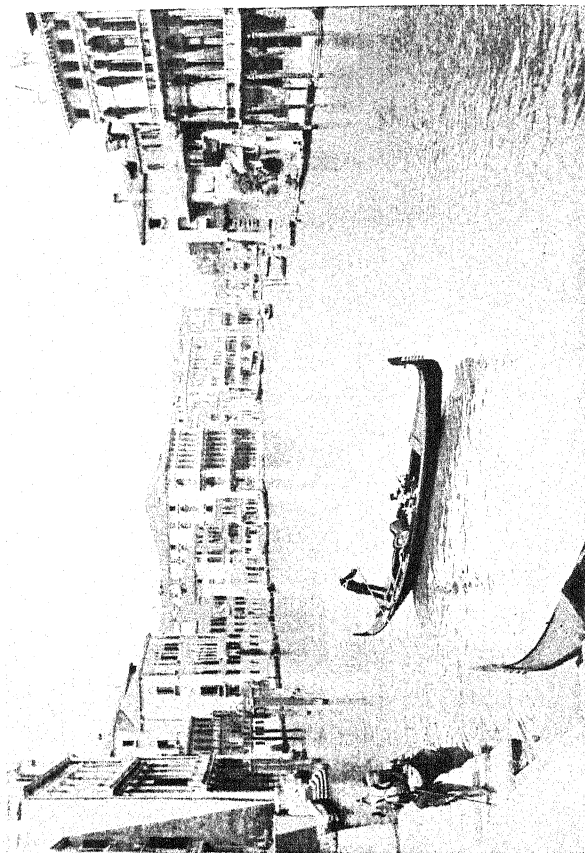
* Due, it was said, to their intercourse with the East.

Things Seen in Venice

other parts of the town. Typical is the mixture of the stately and the banal in the cluster of buildings. Typical, above all, is the harmonious effect produced through the blending of many tints and styles by the magic of the Venetian atmosphere.

It would be easy to spend many pages in a detailed description of the different palaces which flank the Grand Canal on either hand—massive Renaissance structures of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Prominent among these are the great Vendramin-Calergi (1481), with its refreshing green setting of garden on either side, and its noble motto, "NON NOBIS DOMINE" (Ps. cxv. 1); the Pesaro (1679); the Corner della Regina, recalling the memory of the ill-fated Queen Caterina Cornaro, though dating in its present form from 1724; and after the Rialto Bridge the Manin (sixteenth century)—home of Venice's last Doge—now Banca d' Italia; the Grimani (sixteenth century), now Court of Appeal; the Papadopoli (also sixteenth century), like the Manin, attributed to Sansovino; the Rezzonico, in which the poet Browning breathed





Photo

Batience, St. Moritz.

A BEND IN THE GRAND CANAL.

The massive palace in the central middle distance is the Rezzonico, where Robert Browning died.

The Grand Canal

his last; the somewhat less imposing row of Mocenigo palaces, in one of which Byron lodged; and the Corner della Ca' Grande, now official residence of the Prefect. Or, again, we might make a study of the Gothic structures of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. These range from the very elaborate Ca' d' Oro and the magnificent Ducal Palace; the imposing mass of the Pisani, Foscari, and Giustiniani Palaces; the fine Cavalli and its neighbour the Barbaro, facing the Accademia, to the more modest but extremely graceful buildings with pointed or ogee windows that are always appearing as we pass up and down the Grand Canal. Or, once more, we might devote our attention to the precious relics of a still earlier period, like the Fondaco dei Turchi, already mentioned, and the Dona' and Saibante to right and left of the Traghetto of the Madonetta, all three of which date from the twelfth century. Nor will the English visitor fail to mark with interest the sunny and flower-bedecked front of Ca' Capello, the home of the fine collection of pictures made by the late Sir Henry Layard.

The churches, too, which flank the Canalazzo,

Things Seen in Venice

though not numerous or imposing, have their interest. Besides those already spoken of near the station, we pass one on either hand before reaching the Rialto, and each of these, by its name, typifies the gymnastic feats of which the Venetian dialect is capable. That of S. Eustacchio (St. Eustace), on the right, has dwindled into S. "Stae"; while the temple on the left, dedicated to SS. Ermagora e Fortunato (Hermagoras and Fortunatus) has transformed itself compactly in dialect into the single name of "S. Marcuola"! No other churches actually adjoin the Grand Canal till, after the last bend, in sight of the iron bridge of the Accademia, we pass S. Samuele, with its charming thirteenth-century belfry, on the left, followed shortly by S. Vidal (St. Vitalis) at the bridge itself. But almost directly opposite S. Samuele, we may obtain a peep down a side-canal, to the right, of one of the noblest towers in Venice, the campanile of S. Barnaba. Opposite S. Vidal, at the other extremity of the iron bridge, stands what remains of the fourteenth-century church of the Carità, worked into a most in-artistic group by modern Italian taste, to form



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CA' D' ORO.

The most elaborate of Venetian palaces, about the same date as
Palazzo Ducale.

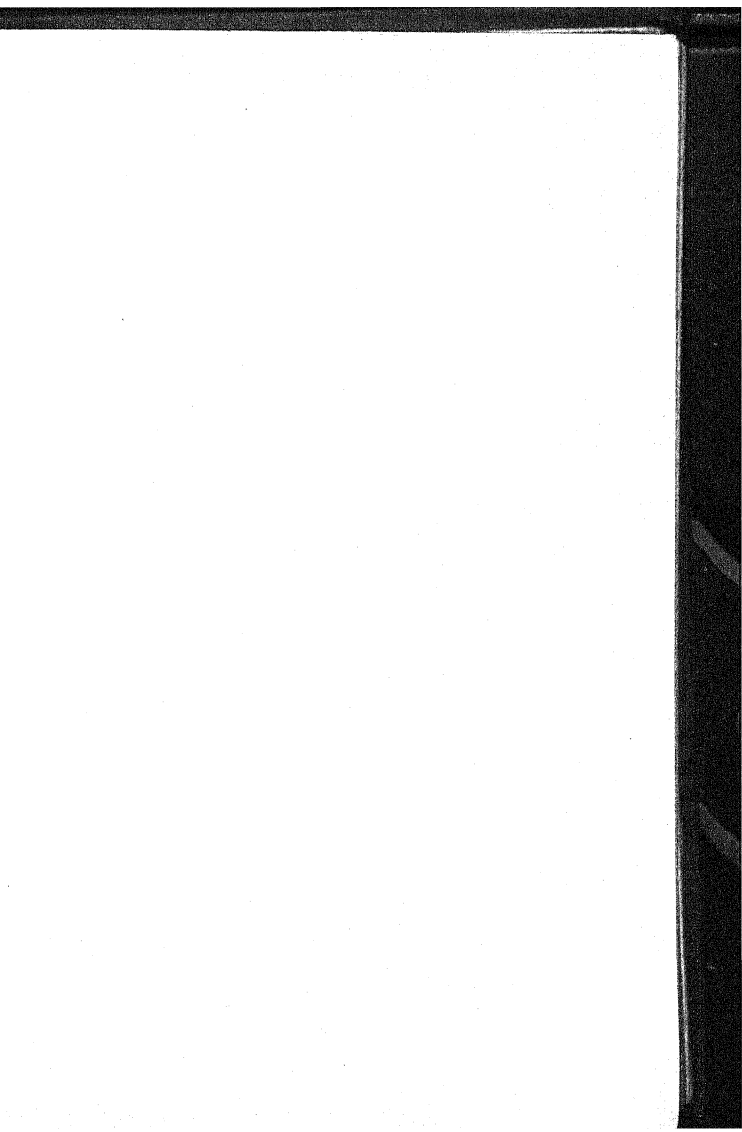
The Grand Canal

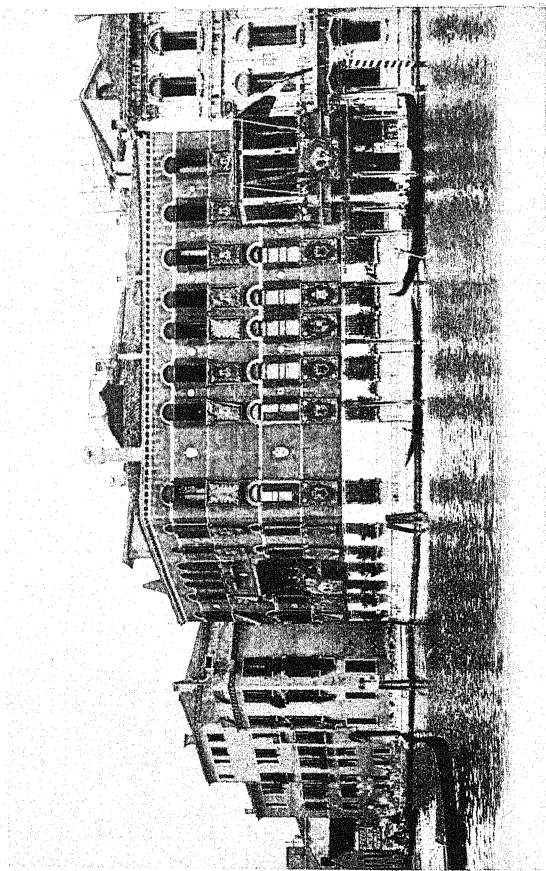
the Academy of Fine Arts. Henceforth the ecclesiastical interest passes to the right-hand side of the water, till we come to the Piazzetta, with its glimpse of St. Mark's. First we see the little *campo*, or square, of S. Vio (St. Vitus), with its lovely Byzantine shrine—"surely the tiniest church in Venice," says Mr. Horatio Brown, "and perhaps the oldest, for it dates from the year 917." On one side of this *campo* stands the modern Anglican Chapel of St. George, a transformed warehouse which has no external features to attract attention to itself, but is well worth a visit for the restrained and modest dignity of its interior. By a happy combination of good fortune and good taste, a result has been obtained which suggests at once an English college chapel, and the chapel of an old Venetian *scuola*, or guild. Further down, still on the right-hand side, is the stately brown Gothic church of S. Gregorio, behind the quaint quadrangle of the Abbazia, and adjacent to Longhena's seventeenth-century temple of Our Lady of Health, Sta. Maria della Salute, one of Venice's two votive Plague Churches. This remarkable

Things Seen in Venice

group, which harmonizes so wonderfully with its surroundings—the Patriarchal Seminary and the Marine Custom House on the Punta della Salute—gives the Grand Canal its finishing touch. It forms such a wholly admirable feature of the landscape as one looks westward from the Basin of St. Mark—the broad sheet of water into which the Canalazzo debouches, or eastward from the direction of the iron bridge—that it is almost impossible to realize that Venice lived—and was admired—for so many centuries without it.

The total effect of this mixture of styles and scales of architecture, ecclesiastical and domestic, is indescribably interesting and delightful. The variation of colour gives an added charm, and the graceful curves of the canal itself, with the fine outline of the Rialto Bridge at its central point, completes the picture. On a bright spring day when private gondolas abound, with their graceful awnings and gaily-dressed gondoliers, and every note of colour is enforced by its reflection in the glittering green waters, the Grand Canal is indeed a good thing to look upon. But it is interesting





Photo

CA' CAPELLO

The residence of Lady Layard, in festal array.

Trombini, Venice.

The Grand Canal

at all times of day, from early morning till late at night; and in all weathers, except when a sea-fog blots out the view of it.

Pietro Aretino, the rascally journalist of the sixteenth century, has left us a record of his impressions of the Grand Canal as seen from a palace window near the Rialto Bridge, and his picture would almost pass muster to-day but for the disturbing presence of the "tram" steamers, and the manifold results of their fussy, bustling movements.

"This," he says, "is the Patriarch of all other canals, even as Venice is the chief of all other cities. I enjoy," he goes on, "the fairest and most agreeable view in the whole world. When I go to my window, I see hundreds of people and as many gondolas at market-time. Facing me are the meat and fish markets, the Campo del Mancino, the Bridge and Fondaco of the Germans; over against these the Rialto, trodden by the feet of busy wayfarers." Weighing the counter-attractions of an invitation to enjoy the sport and refreshment offered by the mainland in autumn, he continues: "The boats I see from my window are

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laden with grapes, the ships with game; there are gardens in the streets themselves. Why should I want to look upon streams and meadows?" Here one would be inclined to pick a quarrel with the Aretine. He has disclosed the weakest point of Venice from the æsthetic point of view—its want of response to the call of spring and autumn—but of that more anon.

Pietro proceeds to describe the delight of watching in the very early hours of the morning a great *barca* laden with flowers and fruit, distributing its burden to lesser boats grouped round it; and the sights with which later hours regale him, of gondolas filled with fair dames in silks and jewels, the shouting gondoliers gay in scarlet hose.

Pietro Aretino was certainly well placed. There can be no dispute that one of the points of chiefest interest in this "Patriarch" of Venetian waterways is the Rialto, with its constant movement and cheerful bustle, and with the effective colour-scheme furnished by the fruit and vegetable market, where "the oranges," as Aretino says, "spread their gold at the feet of the Camerlenghi Palace."

The Grand Canal

Other points have their special days or seasons of interest; once a year, the reach where the races are rowed in the summer regatta—when the Canal is, for the nonce, as solid-looking as the Thames at Henley, and, if possible, more motley in its colouring; the Bacino di S. Marco on all occasions which can be made excuse for a *festa*; the station steps at one end, and those of the Palazzo Reale at the other, when a crowned head shows itself in Venice.

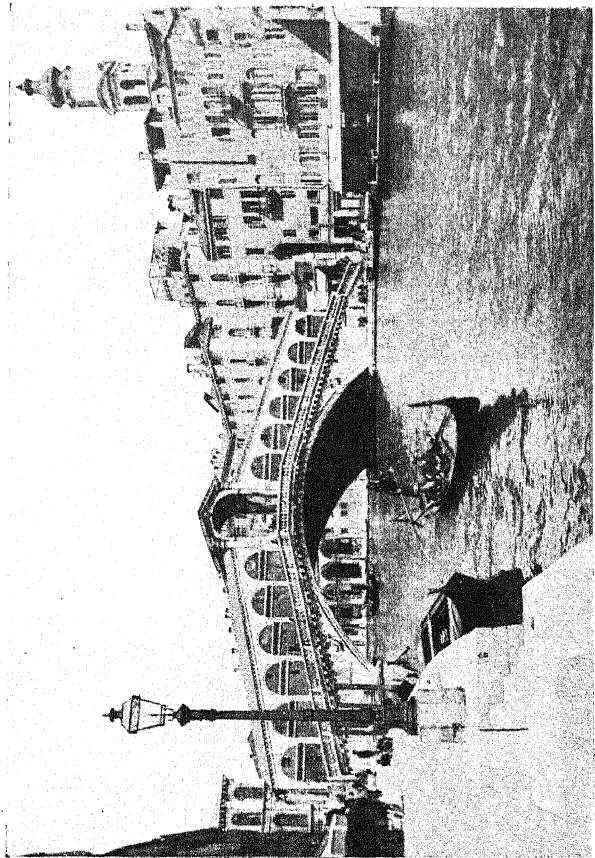
On warm nights during the season, the Basin of St. Mark, and the mouth of the canal in front of the hotels, is gay with light and singing. The barques of the singers, conspicuous by their display of Chinese lanterns, are surrounded by groups of dusky gondolas with one twinkling light apiece; and on really great occasions the scene is enlivened by the burning of red and green Bengal lights at the Punta della Salute and other points of vantage, bands play on the Piazzetta or the Riva, and a large fairy-like structure, called “Galleggiante,” decked out with scores of coloured lamps, forms a centre for the whole group upon the water.

Things Seen in Venice

Fireworks, whose every scintillation is doubled by reflection, give the final touch of brilliancy to the pageant.

One day in the year the interest of the Grand Canal is concentrated on a point far away from S. Marco. We must return to a spot which we marked as interesting in our hasty survey—the point where the ancient Fondaco dei Turchi and the “Non Nobis” Palace face one another from opposite sides of the water.

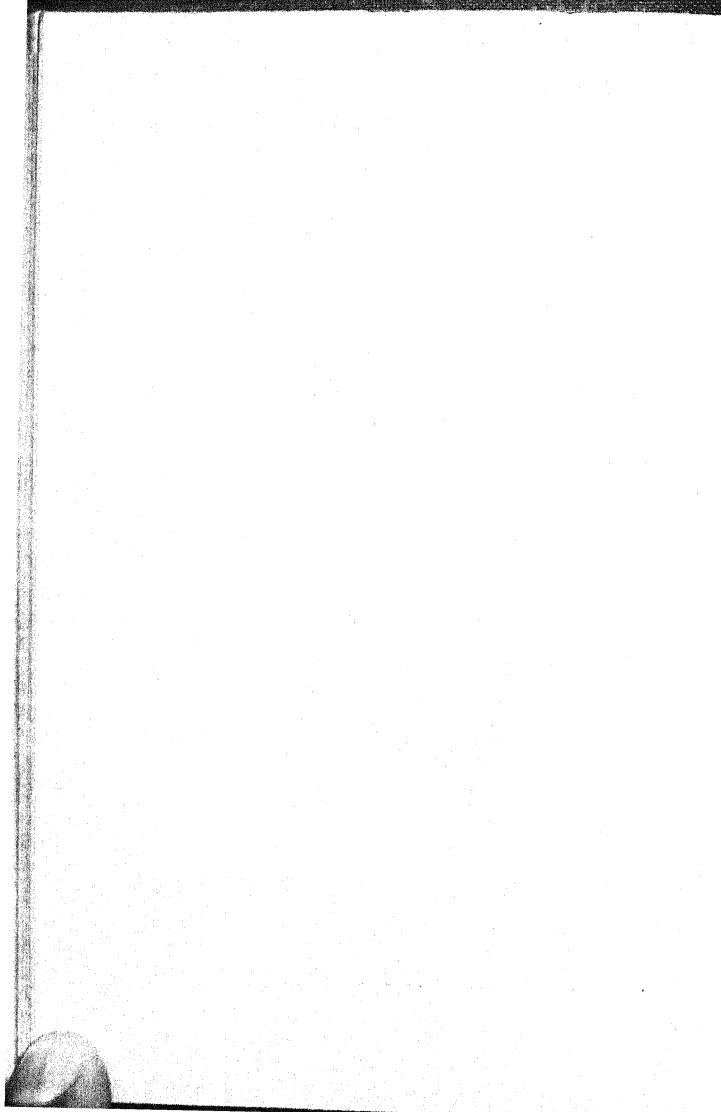
To listen to an excellent Wagner concert, seated, as in an opera-box, under the *felze* and on the comfortable cushions of a gondola, gently rocked by the movement of the tide, is a singularly pleasant way of spending a February afternoon, and one which may be enjoyed annually by the inhabitants of Venice. On February 13, the anniversary of Richard Wagner's death, the well-trained and admirably conducted Municipal Band gives a selection of the great composer's works, not in the Piazza, the usual place of its performances, but beneath the portico of the Museo Civico, one of the most glorious palaces on the Grand Canal. This palace dates (as we have seen) from the



Photo

THE RIALTO BRIDGE.
Seen from the eastern side.

Ballano, St. Moritz.



The Grand Canal

ninth century, and is a magnificent example of the Italian-Byzantine style. In 1621 it was purchased by the Venetian Republic from the House of Este, and converted into a warehouse and place of business for Turkish merchants, who paid rent for it. Henceforth it was known as the "Fondaco dei Turchi." In the middle of the nineteenth century it was thoroughly restored, and arranged for its present use as a Municipal Museum. The Vendramin Palace opposite was erected for the great Venetian family of Loredan by one of the Lombardi.

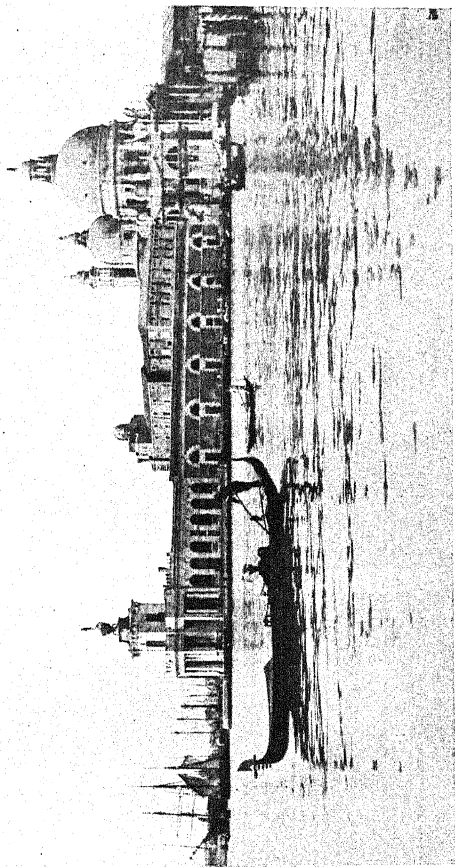
Few palaces in the city have changed hands by sale so frequently. The last sellers were the Vendramini, whose name still clings to it, and the last purchaser the Duchess de Berri, mother of Henry V., Comte de Chambord, from whom it came by inheritance to the present owners.

Built of grey Istrian stone, with pillars of marble, medallions of porphyry, spacious mul-lioned windows, and a pleasant garden overlooking the Canal, it unites the strength of a fortress, the dignity of a Renaissance dwelling-house, and the comfort and light demanded by modern luxury. It was in the *mezzanino*

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of this palace—the low story between the ground-floor and the *piano nobile*—that Richard Wagner died some eight and twenty years ago; and the strains of his music which float across the canal and rise to the apartment which he used to love, are the serenade of the living to a great Shade.

The noble building of which we have just been speaking may well form the text of a short digression upon the normal construction of a Venetian palace. For the splendid homes of the merchant-princes of the Republic in which, to the lasting benefit of posterity, they did not shrink from sinking the bulk of their capital, are nearly all of them constructed on a single model—the model (with one modification) of the native country house. In one essential point the Venetian building differs from that of the mainland—in the nature, that is, of its foundations. Venice stands upon myriads of wooden piles driven deeply and firmly into the mud of the banks on which its original inhabitants took refuge from the unspeakable horrors of barbarian invasion. On these piles, driven home to the accompaniment

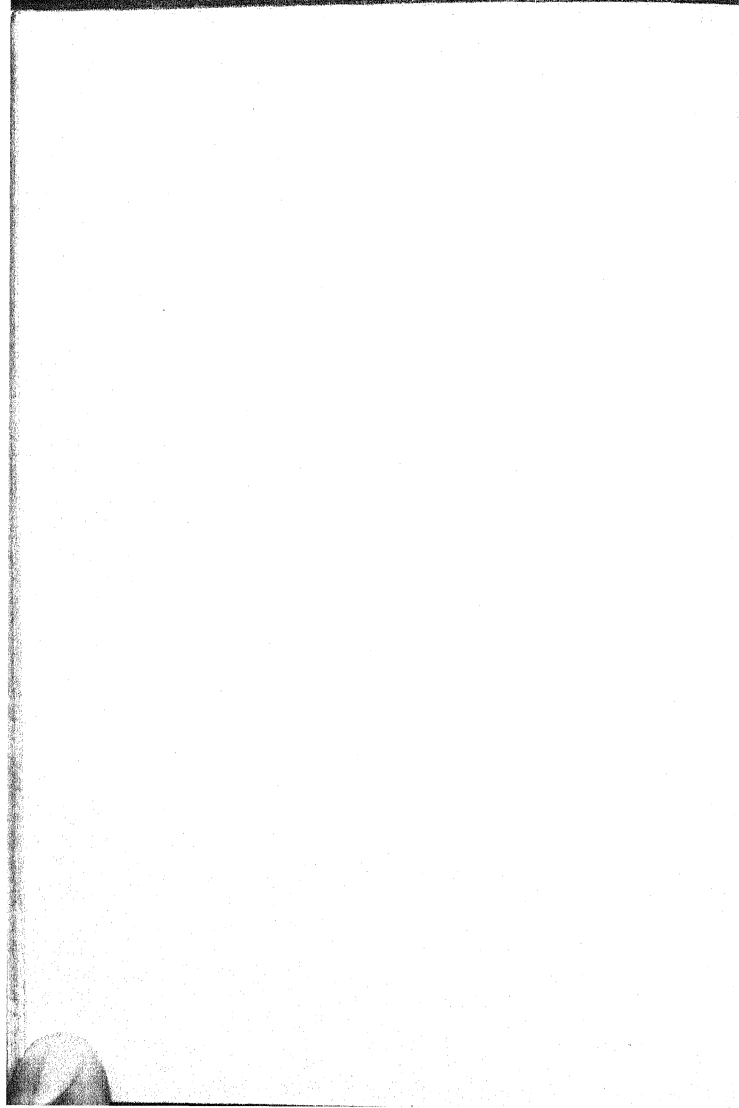


Photo

PUNTA DELLA SALUTE.

The Dogana, Seminario Patriascale, and Church of S. Maria della Salute.

Ballance, St. Moritz.



The Grand Canal

of weird traditional songs (as may still be heard and witnessed occasionally by the lucky visitor), immensely heavy blocks of stone are laid, and upon them is built up the extremely solid and massive structure of the Venetian palace. The building is in four, five, or six stories, each of which is divided by thick party walls into three long sections running from front to back. The central section in each story has no lateral partitions, but forms a sort of lighting and ventilating shaft, having large windows at either end. The two side-sections are divided into a number of smaller parts—chambers, offices, etc.—to which access is gained by doors opening into the central section—the *sala*, or hall—or else (in the case of offices or back premises) directly from the staircase. Each floor is very solidly constructed of concrete (*terrazza*) laid on strong wooden beams placed the short way across from wall to wall, one close upon another. In some of the palaces these ceiling beams, elaborately painted and gilded, form a conspicuous adornment. The lowest floor, next the water, is, generally speaking, quite uninhabitable by reason of the damp, and is used

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only for storage of the gondola and its appurtenances. It serves, however, of necessity, as the entrance to the house, approached at the front end by gondola, and from the back on foot, the back-door opening upon a small courtyard, or, more often, directly upon one of those narrow and crooked alleys—*calli*, the Venetians call them—which the pedestrian in Venice is forced to traverse. "The entrance on the land side," says Pietro Aretino, "is in this habitation dark and tortuous, and the staircase is bad." As to the approach on foot, his words would be true of almost any Venetian palace, even the grandest; the Vendramin* being one of the very few exceptions in which the land entrance attains even a tolerable standard of decency and seemliness. Yet the fact remains—little suspected by the average visitor—that practically every house in Venice can be approached on foot.

The story next above the ground-floor in a Venetian palace is called, as we have said, the *mezzanino*, or *mezzanin*; it is not so lofty as those above it, and where a single

* The Rezzonico is another.

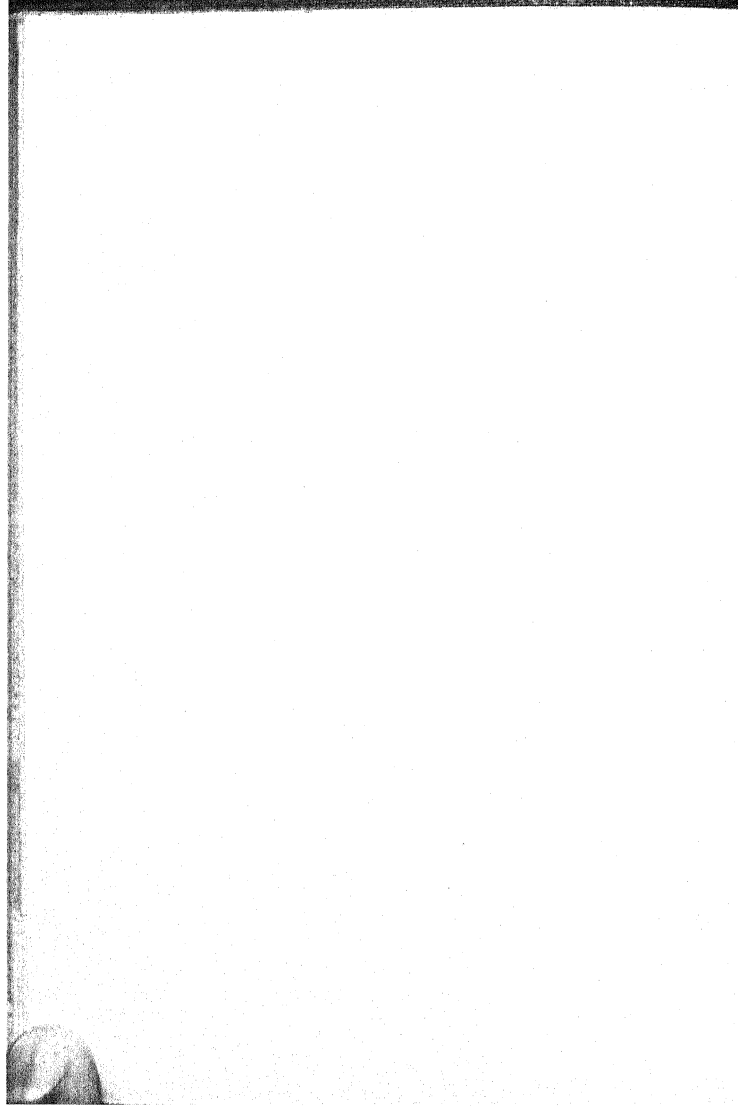


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A "TRAGHETTO."

Showing the wooden steps and shelter, and the gondolas moored to their
"crooked posts."



The Grand Canal

family still occupies the entire palace, it forms a convenient refuge for the winter months (winters are cold in Venice, though for the most part sunny), being more easily warmed than the spacious *piano nobile*. In the *mezzanin* the merchant-prince transacted such business as could be done at home; and an office in Venice is to this day styled a *mezzà*. The *piano nobile*, or reception-floor, is an apartment of great dignity and beauty in a typical *palazzo*. The long and finely-proportioned *sala* has frequently a picturesque balcony on the water-front, to which access is gained through an arcade formed by a group of pointed, ogee, or round-headed windows. The windows or openings at either end of the *sala* were in former days unglazed, leaving the hall open to all weathers—a veritable ventilating shaft, as we have said, for the whole house; but in these days of luxury and softness the windows are all glazed; and the hall where the ancient Venetian used to sit, if he sat there at all, in furs and hat, has degenerated into a modern drawing-room. It is only fair to add that it makes one of the finest and most

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dignified drawing-rooms conceivable. And the views from its front windows—especially if the palace be on the Grand Canal—are indescribably fascinating. Not seldom there are two “noble” floors, in one of which the eldest married child would, in old days, have been ensconced: to-day such an apartment is considered a valuable financial asset, and is in most cases let to a separate family—as is often done, also, with the *mezzanin*, and not seldom with the uppermost story of all. This *ultimo piano*, devoted in former days to the servants and retainers of the house, is usually of about the same proportions as the *mezzanin*, but has the advantage of much more sunlight and a purer and drier air; it is greatly to be recommended to those who would find no difficulty in ascending, two or three times a day, three or four score of hard, and sometimes steep, stone stairs.

One notable advantage the Venetian palace derives from the peculiarity of its foundations: massive and heavy as is its structure, it is one of the safest habitations in the world in time of earthquake. The foundation is *elastic*, and

The Grand Canal

consequently the whole building can oscillate securely in one piece.

Before we leave the Canalazzo there is one more point that demands our attention—the *traghetto*.

There are, in all, eleven of these *traghetti*, or public ferries, on the Grand Canal, and they form, historically as well as æsthetically, one of the most picturesque features of that noble waterway.

The group of boats lying at the foot of a quaint collection of wooden water-steps, amid a crowd of crooked wooden posts—only one degree less crooked than their own reflections in the green water; in the background a more or less animated cluster of stalwart figures centred round a wooden shelter, enlivened sometimes by a tint of growing green—vine, or other creeper—and furnished with a little shrine of the patron saint of the *traghetto*, adds an extra touch of beauty even to the Canalazzo.

Every *traghetto*, moreover, has its own individuality. True, at every ferry you pay the same fare—a penny (*palanca*) by night,

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and half that sum (*mezza-palanca* or *cinque schei*) by day, laying your obol on the gunwale of the boat, like one of Charon's ghostly passengers. At every ferry you may have similar experiences, and overhear similar conversations. But the subtle difference remains; and it carries us back by suggestion to the days, not so very long ago, when each *traghetto* was a close corporation, with its own guild-chapel and religious ceremonies, with its jealously-guarded rights and customs—a sort of benefit club, with a monopoly of the gains accruing from the proceeds of the ferrying within a certain area. In course of time, even during the days of the Republic, the gondoliers of the *traghetti* forfeited one by one their most cherished privileges—forfeited them by their own short-sighted and insensate behaviour—till now the last relic of real independence has left them; they are simply servants of the Municipality, to which they are responsible for the efficiency and continuity of the ferry service, by day and by night. But their officers—an annually elected *Gastaldo* at the head and four *Bancali* to support him—still bear the

The Grand Canal

same names which Mr. Horatio Brown has found in the old charters of the *traghetto* guilds or *scuole*, dating in some cases from the fourteenth century. The *traghetto*, even in these degenerate days, when one of its proud members may be handed over for insolence or neglect of duty to the police by any irate foreigner or fellow-citizen, has still its elaborate rules of rotation and precedence, and, no doubt, its jealously-guarded customs and traditions.

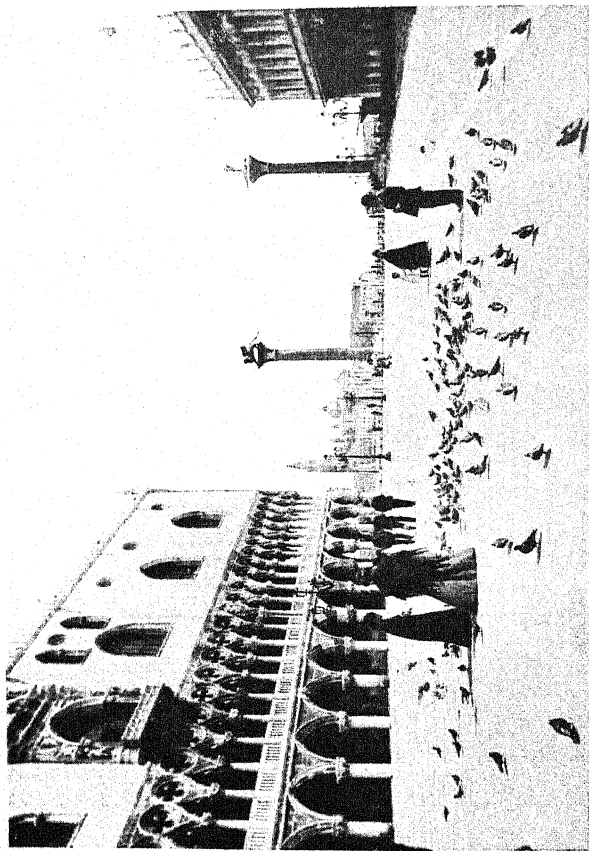
CHAPTER III

THE HEART OF VENICE

"I never during three years passed through it in my daily walks without feeling, as freshly as at first, the greatness of its beauty."

THUS wrote Howells of the Piazza of S. Marco; and his words are echoed by every foreigner who elects, for any lengthy period, to make a home in Venice. Thronged for a public *festa*, brilliant with flags and hangings, and echoing to the strains of music; silent and deserted on frosty, starlit nights, or in the early dawn of soft, warm mornings; with its shops brightly illuminated on winter afternoons, or shrouded with awnings from a burning summer sun—at all hours and in every season the Piazza is "a thing of beauty," rejoicing the hearts of those who visit it, and drawing them with magnetic attraction to itself.

Other open spaces in Venice, even the big



Photo

THE PIAZZETTA.

On the left is the Doge's Palace : in front the two columns of St. Mark and St. Theodore, with the island and church of S. Giorgio Maggiore in the distance.

Balcone, St. Moritz.

The Heart of Venice

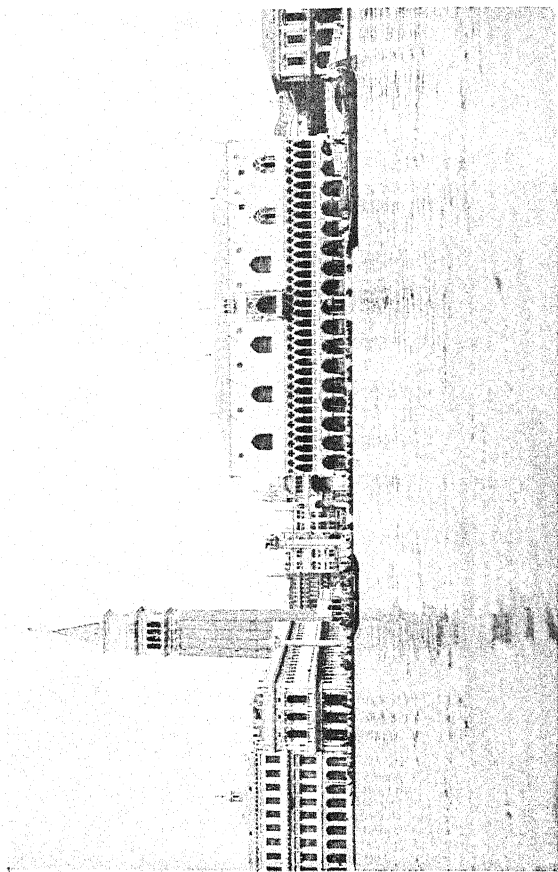
Campo S. Margherita and Campo S. Polo, are "Fields"; this is "The Square" *par excellence*. Once, we are told, it was so full of merchants and strangers that it might have been called the "Forum Orbis, non Urbis." In one sense it is so still; only the cosmopolitan crowd of to-day is bent on pleasure rather than on business. Certainly all classes mingle here in a happy proximity unknown in Paris, London, or New York. On fine summer evenings when the band plays, and chairs and tables are spread far out on the pavement in front of the cafés, groups of men and women of all sorts and conditions sit side by side, enjoying the inexpensive luxuries of music, fresh air, chatter, and flirtations, with long-drawn-out gustations of coffee and *scioppi*. The only exception to the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the Piazza is the understanding among Venetian residents that, in the evening, ladies should be taken to Florian's—the famous café that has not closed its doors day and night for three hundred years—rather than to the less expensive cafés on the north side of the Piazza. And here, perhaps, I may inconsequently insert a piece of useful

Things Seen in Venice

information. On sultry evenings two drinks rarely ordered by English people are much to be recommended : tamarind syrup (*tamarindo*) with ice and aerated water (*acqua gazzosa*), and iced black coffee sweetened to taste with sugar dissolved into a syrup.

The woman of the people does not feel a *festa* complete unless she has been "in Piazza" to hear the band. It is *un jour perdu* for a Venetian *elegante*, if she has been unable, on a winter morning, to take a turn in Piazza before luncheon. The man whose business is not too far distant adjourns to the Piazza after his mid-day meal to take a cup of coffee in the sunshine. Leisured patricians linger in Piazza before entering or leaving the fashionable club. The well-to-do babes of Venice clamour to be taken to Piazza to see the pigeons, and their *balie* (wet-nurses)—handsome women from the Friuli—are only too pleased to fall in with their charges' wishes. Visitors, chiefly English and American, frequent Lavena's tea-rooms at five o'clock, and at all hours gaze into the windows where lace, jewellery, beads and glass are displayed, and fall victims to exasperating touts





Photo

THE HEART OF VENICE.

Royal Palace, Zecca, Campanile, Ducal Palace and Prison.

Rialto, St. Moritz.

The Heart of Venice

who pounce on the unwary with invitations to visit glass or lace factories.

Once, on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, I beheld the Piazza as thickly thronged at two o'clock at night as on any festal afternoon or evening. Shortly after the terrible earthquake in Sicily, Venice experienced a sharp, though brief, shock. Every one, believing that this was but the beginning of further disaster, rushed into the largest available open space, regardless of the fact that it was all too small for safety. Florian's did a good trade that night; for though the weather was serene and still, there was a nip in the air, and when the first terror had subsided, hot drinks were sought with avidity.

The wonders of the Piazza are epitomized in a Venetian quatrain :

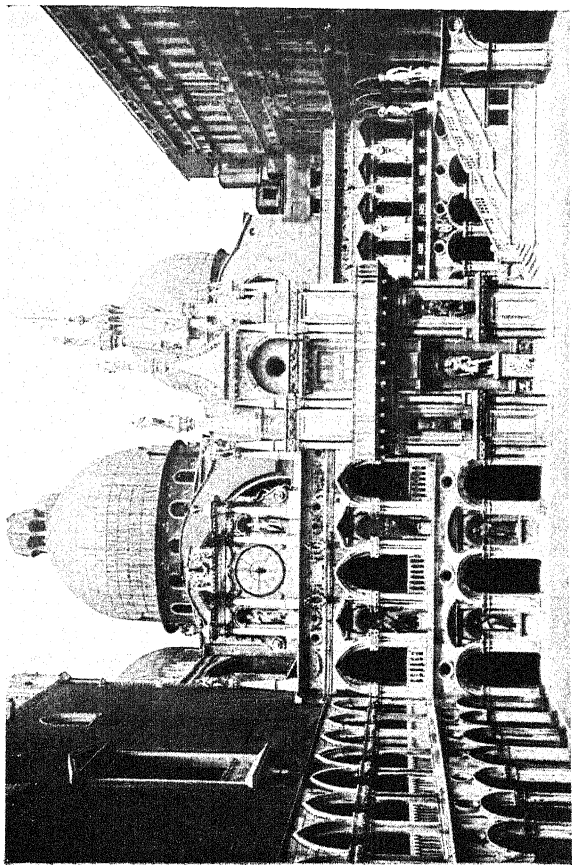
"In Piazza San Marco ghe xe tre standardi,
Ghe xe quattro cavai che par che i svola,
Ghe xe un relógio che par una tore,
Ghe xe do Mori che bate le ore."

(In St. Mark's Place there are three standards, there are four horses that seem to fly, there is a clock which seems a tower, there are two Moors who beat the hours.)

Things Seen in Venice

The pigeons which figure so largely in Venetian photographs might almost be reckoned as a fifth wonder of the Piazza. They are probably the descendants of pigeons which used to be let loose with shackled legs from the balcony over the west door of St. Mark's as part of a Palm Sunday largess to the populace. Some of these birds escaped and took sanctuary among the spires and domes of the Basilica : an act which appealed to the sentiment and superstition of the Venetians, who henceforth not only spared but fed the doves of St. Mark. They now subsist on private charity, and fare well on it, while the men who sell pennyworths of corn for their consumption also benefit by the liberality of children and strangers to these tame, glossy, prosperous denizens of St. Mark's Place.

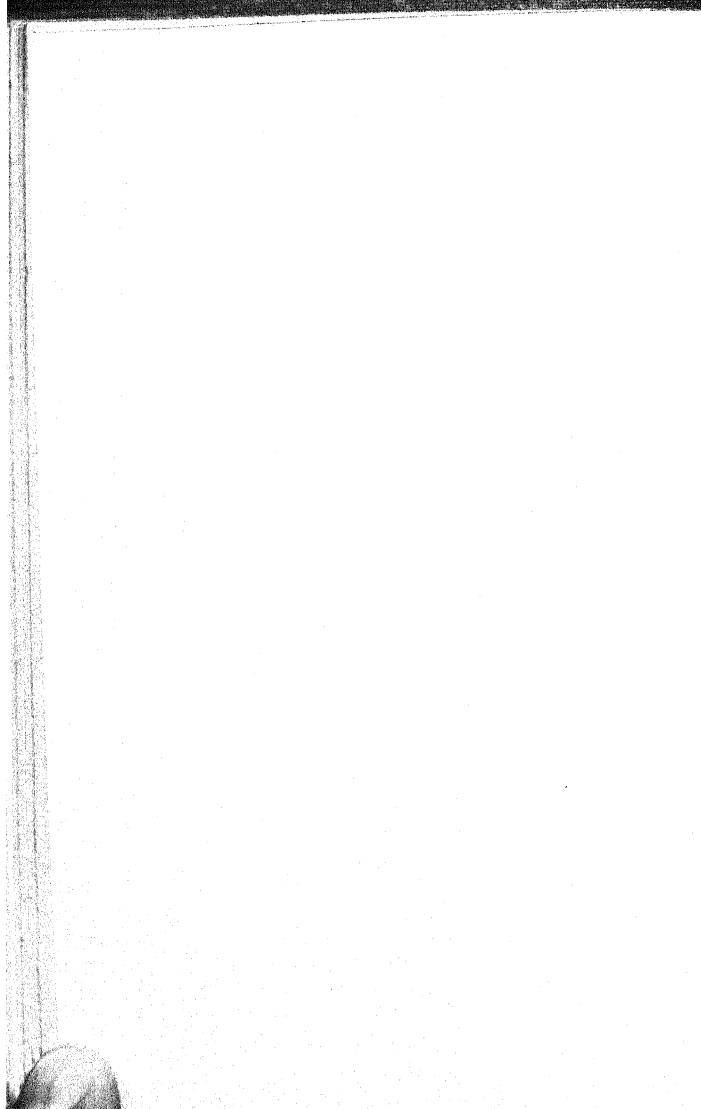
A sixth wonder of the Piazza is undoubtedly the new Campanile, erected, with the greatest archæological care and the highest engineering skill, to replace the old one, which, in July, 1902, quietly sat down, as though worn out by its long watching. Hardly less wonderful will be the restoration of the Loggia, built by Sansovino in 1540 as a meeting-place for the Venetian



WITHIN THE COURTYARD OF THE DUCAL PALACE.

The domes of St. Mark's in the background.

Topical Press.



The Heart of Venice

nobles. It was, of course, overwhelmed by the fall of the giant who had sheltered it ; but its fragments were collected and gradually pieced together in one of the rooms of the Ducal Palace: so that, though the original plans have not been found, the Loggia of Sansovina— “ little, yet of singular and incomparable beauty,” as Coryat found it—will once again adorn the Piazza.

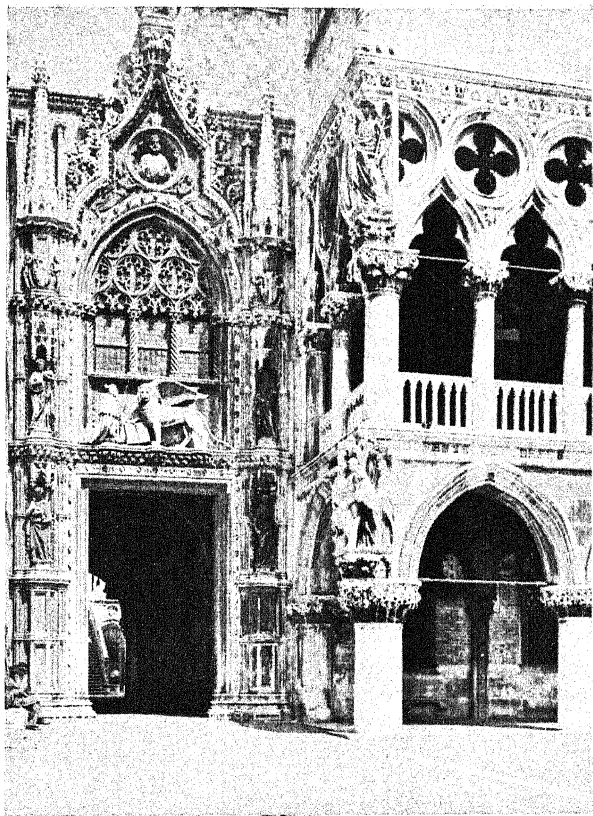
Much has been urged, and may be urged, for and against these restorations. No one can deny that the distant view of Venice from the water lost much by the absence of the tall streak of the Campanile. The view *from* its summit, moreover, is a great gain to the tourist, enabling him to understand at a glance the plan and situation of the city, though with a curious geographical delusion : seen from a height the roofs hide the intersecting canals, and Venice appears without her waterways.

The sentimental argument has a double edge, and cuts both ways. As to the æsthetic arguments, “ *de gustibus non disputandum.*” Speaking as a dispassionate foreigner, who has seen Venice with and without its Campanile, yet has not the sentiment of a Venetian for a dear

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familiar object, I avow that the Piazza seems to me more dignified and harmonious *sans* Bell Tower, and that St. Mark's, already dwarfed apparently by the height of the buildings to its right and left, and actually by repeated raisings of the pavement level, appears to crouch yet lower when overshadowed by its gigantic sentinel.

It is interesting to compare the present aspect of the Piazza with its appearance in the fifteenth century, as shown in Gentile Bellini's famous picture of a procession. On the left we see the Procuratie Vecchie looking much as they do in a modern photograph ; but on the right a building of more ancient character adjoins the Campanile. This was the Hospital of Doge Pietro Orseolo. In 1582 the hospital was removed to Campo S. Gallo, and the dwellings beyond it were demolished ; the present line of buildings was then erected further back, and became the official residence of the Procurators of the Republic. Though over three hundred years old, and long since converted into a Royal palace, this building is still known as the Procuratie Nuove. Early in the nineteenth century an extension of the palace in the same style was



Photo

Ballance, St. Moritz.

PORTA DELLA CARTA.

(Paper Gate.)

The State entrance to the Ducal Palace.

The Heart of Venice

carried across the west end of the Piazza, occupying the site of the old church of S. Geminiano, demolished by Napoleon.

It is doubtful whether the widening of the Piazza and isolation of the Campanile were improvements from an æsthetic point of view. As the termination of a line of buildings, the great tower, one would think, must have risen dominating but not obtrusive; St. Mark's, at the end of a narrower oblong, must have been seen from the west in better perspective; while the Piazza must have shown more obviously as the outer court of the wonderful temple.

This little book does not pretend to be a guide to St. Mark's. Tourists will have no difficulty in supplying themselves with detailed information about the Basilica and the Ducal Palace, while those who would see them through an artist's eyes, and hear them described in the language of a prose-poet, have only to turn to the pages of the "Stones of Venice" and of "St. Mark's Rest."

Visitors who have several days to spend in Venice will do well to enter St. Mark's frequently, steeping themselves in its colour, and

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studying its details bit by bit. Those whose time is limited, or who, accustomed only to the grey majesty of our Northern cathedrals, feel bewildered, possibly disappointed, before a structure corresponding to nothing in their previous experience, may perhaps be helped to obtain certain broad impressions which will fix themselves lastingly on the memory.

First of all, then, let us stand, as early in the morning as may be, in the shadow of the portico in the middle of the west side of the Piazza. From this Bocca di Piazza (Mouth of the Square) we see "a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long, low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap it seems, partly of gold and partly of opal, and mother-of-pearl hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches ceiled with fair mosaics" (Ruskin).

Five doors of bronze are sunk in these five porches, the recesses of which are pillared with various precious marbles. Above them is a second tier of five arches, parted from the first by a loggia which runs across the façade, and is protected by three hundred and sixty-four columns. The upper arches are shallow; the

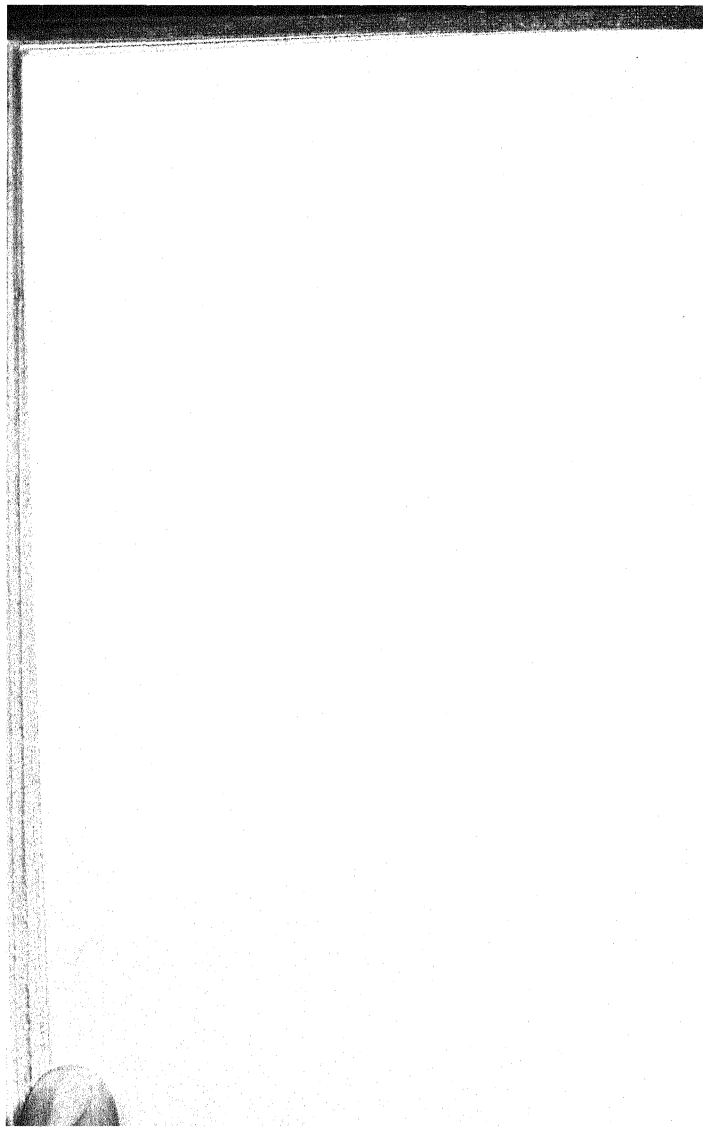


Photo

Bailance, St. Moritz.

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

To the left is the Ducal Palace ; to the right the Prison.



The Heart of Venice

central one behind the bronze horses is larger than the other four, and is a window protected by stone lattice-work. "The crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray."

After studying this lovely façade from a point somewhere about the line of the Standards, we may enter the Basilica, stepping down where the old Venetians ascended; for, to avoid inundation, the pavement has been raised repeatedly. We find ourselves in the vestibule, or *atrio*, and here the exquisite carving of the capitals should be noted, as also the mosaics of the vaulting, which tell the story of the Creation, Fall, Deluge, and Lives of the Patriarchs. A door on the right leads to the beautiful baptistry elaborately described by Ruskin.

Now let us push aside the curtain and descend into the twilight of the church. At first we see nothing distinctly, but we are conscious of colour palpitating in the atmosphere and streaming out from walls and pavement. By degrees we realize that this pavement, undulat-

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ing gently like the canals, is formed of precious marbles; that the walls glow with priceless incrustations; that the brightness overhead is due to shafts of light striking through narrow apertures in the domes upon the crowded imagery of great tracts of mosaic.

It is the church of a city which, till the discovery of the Cape route, was the great repository and mart of Oriental produce, and which derived almost equal advantages from war or alliance with the Turk. This wealth of mosaic reflects the history of Venice, reflects the "flair" of her merchants, connoisseurs of precious stones and gems—reflects the temper of a people who had absorbed much of the lavishness and luxury of Eastern civilization. But the Orientalism caught by the builders of St. Mark's was chastened by Greek feeling, while it was applied in the spirit of Gothic architecture. The result is a "Place of Worship" in the most true and emphatic sense of the phrase; a temple "exceeding magnificent," rich beyond the dreams of avarice, ingenious with the skill of cunning workmen; where yet one never thinks of the costliness, scarcely ever of the skill dis-

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played, but always of the effect of glory they create.

“Some prefer the pure design :
Give me my glut of colour, gorge of gold,”

comes to be the prevailing sentiment of those inhabitants of Venice who turn into St. Mark's at all hours and seasons, and luxuriate in the colour which no words and scarcely any brush can reproduce.

Moving forward up the nave, we notice the architrave of the screen, with its great bronze crucifix and the fourteenth-century figures of Christ, His mother, and His apostles—the work of two brothers, called after the hard stone which they carved, “Delle Massegne.”*

On either side of the screen are two pulpits. The larger, on the north side, is octangular, sustained by thirteen columns, and in two tiers. From the lower tier the Epistle is read; from the upper the Gospel. On the south side is the pulpit called “Bigonzo,” from which the Doge used to be presented to the people, and where, on Maundy Thursday and Ascension Day, the relics are exhibited.

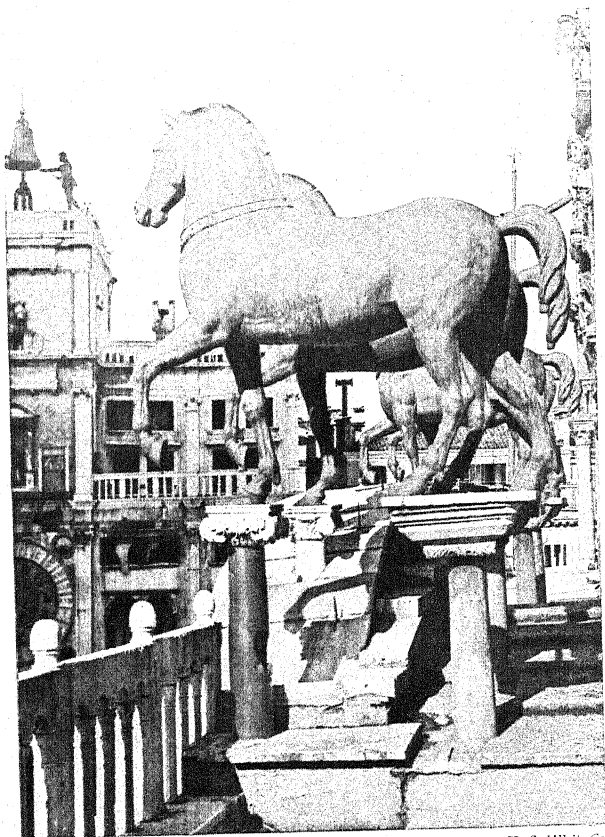
* *Macigno* is a hard limestone.

Things Seen in Venice

The High-Altar must be noticed, with its canopy of *verde antico*, supported by four marble columns with interesting reliefs of the eleventh century. The Pala d' Oro, which is in its glory on high festivals, can be uncovered and viewed at other times on payment of 50 centimes. It is a magnificent specimen of the goldsmiths' work of Constantinople. Made originally in 1105, it was restored, with additions, in the two succeeding centuries. But alas! most of its jewels were carried off by the French in 1797, and inferior stones replace them.

Behind the High-Altar, to the left, a little bronze door leads to the sacristy. It should be noticed, for its maker, Sansovino, adorned it with portraits of his contemporaries. A few minutes, at least, should then be spent in the gallery, reached by a little staircase on the left of the principal entrance-door. From this point of vantage the mosaics of the domes are seen more easily than from below, and very beautiful views of the choir may be obtained.

The Piazza has two prolongations: it curls round the Basilica on the north; it thrusts a



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THE BRONZE HORSES.

On the western parapet of St. Mark's. To the left is the famous
Clock-Tower

The Heart of Venice

straight arm out to the Bacino (Basin, or Harbour) on the south. The first extension is called "Piazzetta dei Leoncini," from two red marble lions erected there in the eighteenth century. It contains the ever-useful Cook's Office, and leads to the Palace of the Patriarch—the title, borrowed from the East, of the Archbishop of Venice.

The south extension is "the Piazzetta," *tout court*, where stand, like sentinels, two slender granite columns. They were brought from Greece, with a third one, which fell into the water during disembarkation, and could not be raised. The remaining two lay long on the ground, till a Lombard, one Niccolo Barattiero, succeeded in erecting them. When asked to name his reward, he begged that gambling, prohibited by the Venetian Republic, should be permitted between the columns. The authorities stultified their permission by making the spot the place of public execution, and therefore of ill-luck.

On the summit of one column is the symbol of the Winged Lion ; on the other is St. Theodore, St. Mark's predecessor in the office of

Things Seen in Venice

Protector of the City. He was the first Patron Saint of Venice, till in A.D. 823, two valiant Venetians stole the body of the Evangelist from Alexandria.

At one time the Piazzetta extended but a few paces beyond the columns, and in front of them was the boat where those sent to the galleys practised rowing. Then the Molo, or esplanade, was formed in front of the Doge's Palace, and what is now the Royal Garden.* It is a sunny spot, beloved by Venetian loiterers.

Turning our backs to the water, and looking again towards the Piazza, we see on our left the Libreria Vecchia, the Old Library, built by Sansovino on a site formerly occupied by inns. The beginning of the work was unfortunate, for in frosty weather, in 1545, an important part of the building suddenly collapsed, and the architect was thrown into prison. Released through the intercession of his friends, especially of the much feared Aretino, he continued the work till his death in 1570, leaving it to be

* Up till 1808, when the gardens were made, this space was occupied by granaries.



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INTERIOR OF ST. MARK'S.

Looking eastward.

The Heart of Venice

completed by his disciple Scamozzi. It is exceedingly stately and beautiful—so beautiful that Palladio pronounced it the most perfect building designed since the days of ancient Rome.

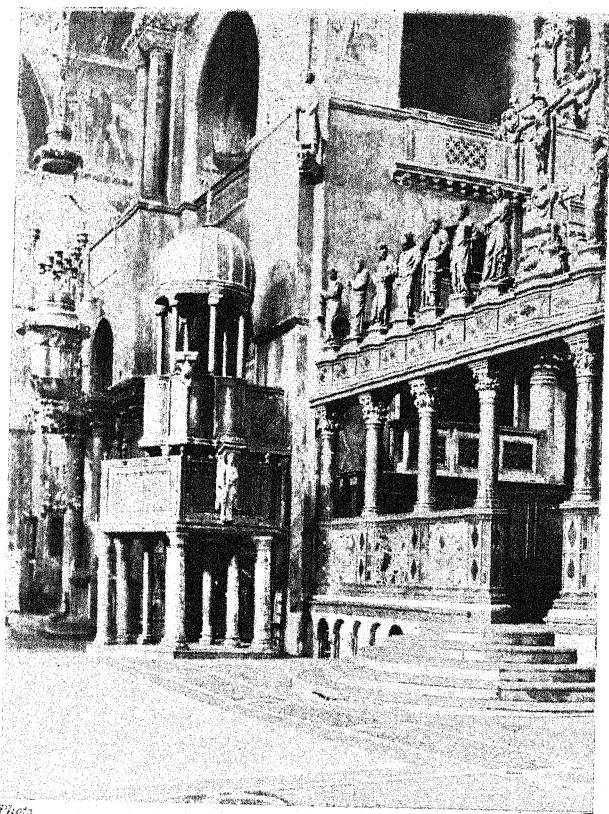
Between it and the Royal Garden, towards the south, is the Zecca,* or Mint, now the home of St. Mark's Library, which, between 1812 and 1905, had been lodged over the way, in the Ducal Palace. Like the Libreria Vecchia, it was designed by Sansovino, who, as a precaution against fire, built it of iron and marble, using no wood in its construction. It is a delightful place to read in, whether we sit in the great hall used as a general reading-room, or penetrate into the quiet *sala* reserved for readers of manuscripts. The Early Flemish breviary, known as "Breviario Grimani" and the fine copy of the "Divina Commedia" of the late fourteenth century, should be inspected by all book-lovers.

On the other side of the Piazzetta is the building which was once the Palace, Prison,

* From which the name of the coin *zecchino* (sequin) is derived.

Things Seen in Venice

Senate House, and Law Courts of the Republic, and is now its monument. Most of us are familiar with the Ducal Palace long before we set foot in Venice. With its three tiers increasing in solidity upwards, it reverses the customs of architecture, and its remarkable shape, once seen in photograph or print, is deeply impressed on the memory. Yet only those who have seen it from the Piazza and from the Lagoon, in cloud and sunshine, in the early morning and on warm, fair afternoons, can know the loveliness of the colour produced by the chequer-work of red and white marble with which the brick core is overlaid. The thirty-six columns of the open colonnade running round the west and south sides of the building have no bases, and appear rather stumpy, a defect largely due to repeated raisings of the Piazza level. Their capitals are extremely beautiful, and those at the angles should be studied carefully, if possible with Ruskin's enthusiastic elucidations. The east side, abutting on Rio Canal, can only be viewed from a gondola, and, says Ruskin: "There are few things in Italy more impressive than the



Photo

Ballance, St. Moritz.

INTERIOR OF ST. MARK'S.

Showing the pulpit (from which the gospel is read) and the choir-screen.

The Heart of Venice

vision of it overhead, as the gondola glides from beneath the 'Bridge of Sighs.'" The bridge itself, leading from the Criminal Courts to the Criminal Prisons on the further side of the Canal, is a commonplace construction of the sixteenth century, quite unworthy of its fallacious sentimental reputation.

Before going over the Ducal Palace—a long and fatiguing bit of sight-seeing, to which the entire morning must be given up—some curiosities close to its principal gateway should be noticed. These are: two short pillars with Greek inscriptions, brought by the Venetians from Acre; a block of porphyry known as the "Pietra del Bando" (Stone of the Decree), from which the decrees of the Republic were announced; and two pairs of male figures in red porphyry let into the corner of St. Mark's nearest the Palace. Probably these quaint couples represent four Emperors who shared the Byzantine throne in the eleventh century. But the English traveller Coryat gives a different account of them. Four brothers, he says, came from Albania to Venice. Two went ashore, two remained on the richly-laden ship.

Things Seen in Venice

Each pair plotted to rid itself of the other; and at a banquet all four died by poison mutually administered. Whereupon the Venetian State seized on their treasures, and as a memorial of the event and its sequel, portrayed the wicked brothers in this curious fashion. "I confess I never reade this historie," says good old Coryat, with touching faith in the veracity of printed matter, "but many gentlemen of very good account in Venice, both Englishmen and others, reported it to me for an absolute truth."

The gateway of the Palace in this corner near the church is extraordinarily beautiful and ornate. It is called the "Porta della Carta" (the Paper Gate), because the decrees of the Republic were placarded here. It was also called "Porta Dorata," from the gold with which it was emblazoned. The figure of the kneeling Doge above the arch is modern, the original having been destroyed by the French in 1797.

Through this gate the visitor will enter the Cortile, where he will look at Riccio's great statues of Adam and Eve, and the fine Renaissance work of the two bronze cisterns. He

The Heart of Venice

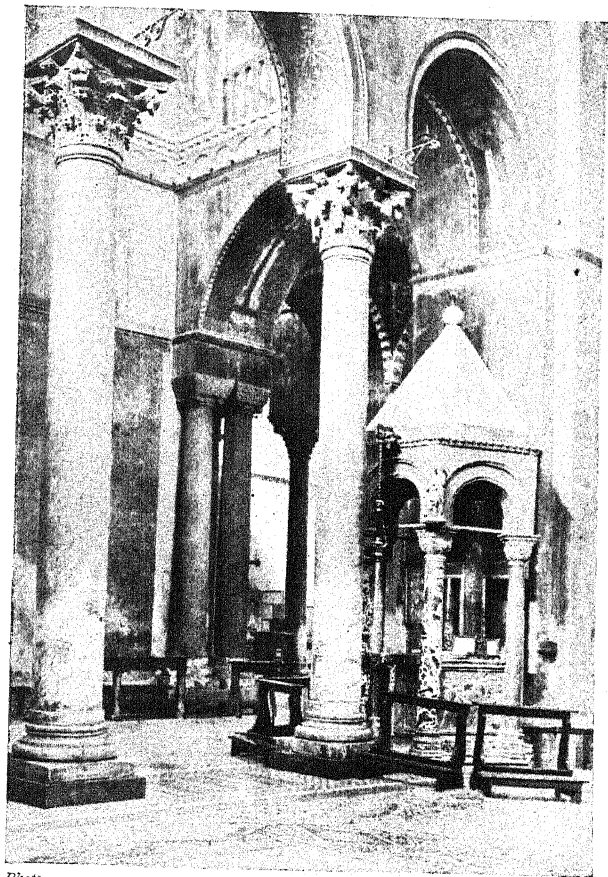
will ascend the Giants' Staircase—so named from Sansovino's statues of Mars and Neptune, between which the later Doges were crowned in the sight of an acclaiming populace in the court below. He will pass up the Scala d' Oro (Golden Staircase), once trodden only by Patricians, whose names were written in the Golden Book; he will find himself in the great rooms where the rulers of the Republic met to decide the destinies of the little State which played so great a part in European history.

He will read its annals in the series of sixteenth-century paintings which adorn the Palace walls; and he will look at the only specimen of earlier work remaining there—the recently discovered fresco of Guariento of Padua, which has been found beneath the gigantic "Paradise" of Tintoretto, and has been treated with marvellous skill and judgment.

Then, with eye and brain wearied with detailed information, imaginative efforts and wealth of visual impression, the traveller will do well to emerge on to the loggia on the south side of the Great Hall, overhanging the Molo, and to linger there awhile.

Things Seen in Venice

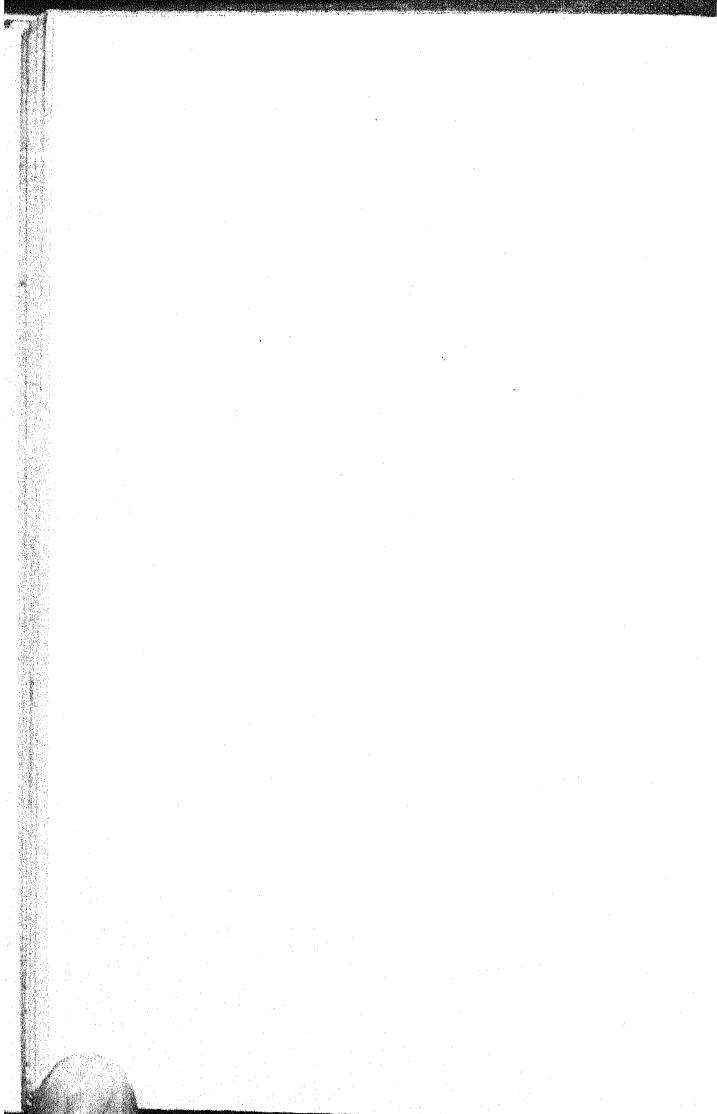
The salt breeze from the Adriatic will bring him refreshment, and his tired eye will rest on the lovely grouping of the buildings on the Island of S. Giorgio Maggiore, on the dancing waters of the Basin, on the green line of the Lido, and on the far-off reaches of the peaceful Lagoon.



Photo

Ballance, St. Moritz.

A SHRINE IN ST. MARK'S.



CHAPTER IV

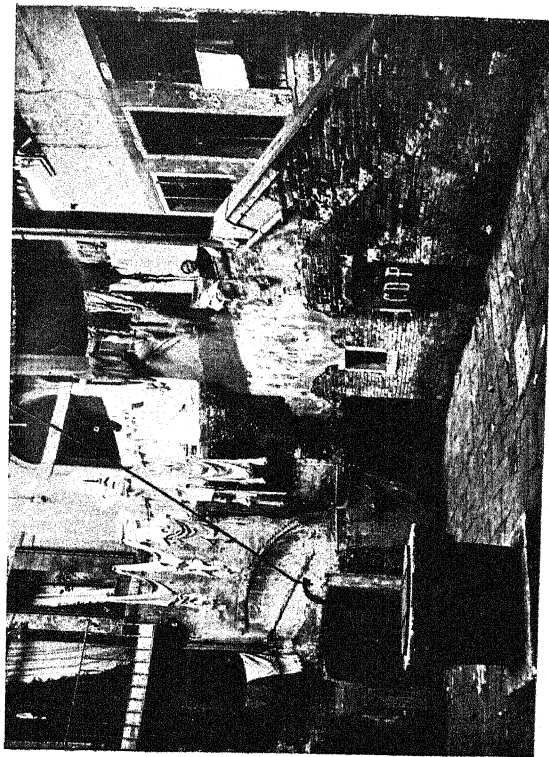
VENICE ON FOOT

THE casual visitor to Venice—more especially if he be (as many are) inclined to spend his fortnight there as luxuriously as possible—often leaves the city without any suspicion that the whole of it, practically, can be traversed on foot. He finds gondolas waiting all day long within call of the concierge of his hotel; or perhaps, with self-congratulatory foresight, he has engaged a particular gondolier by the week. For the longer trips—to Torcello, Murano, or Chioggia—he arranges that his gondolier shall deposit him at the place where the steamboat starts. Possibly, in rare moments when the instinct of economy gets the better of him, he may occasionally take the “tram” steamer to the Lido, or up the Grand Canal. Only in the Piazza and its purlieus does he condescend to set foot to ground, except where his gondola

Things Seen in Venice

lands him (by grace of the *rampino*—the chartered libertine of an old man with a boat-hook who claims to earn a halfpenny, more or less, at every disembarkation). Having fee'd this worthy and well-meaning veteran (usually an ex-gondolier past work), the tourist visits the church or other object which he has set out to see, and returns post-haste to the comfortable cushions which it had cost him some effort to leave.

But whoso would explore at all fully the beauties which Venice offers at every turn must say good-bye to the gondola cushions for hours together, and take to his feet and to the somewhat uneven pavement on which the Venetian habitually walks. He will find that the network of side-canal, which presents so many quaint corners and picturesque vistas to the delighted eye as one glides slowly along in gondola, is supplemented by a still more elaborate network of narrow and tortuous lanes. These *calli*, as they are called, provide an access for foot-passengers to every Venetian dwelling and public building, and furnish, incidentally, numberless little gems of beauty and interest



Tegoni Press.

A VENETIAN BACKYARD.

Interesting old cortile, with well-head and stairs and traces of rich decoration.

Venice on Foot

that can only be seen by the enterprising pedestrian.

So true is this that the late Colonel Hugh Douglas took the trouble to compile an elaborate and systematic "Guide to Venice on Foot": and a very useful little book it is.

Without a careful study of the map, the foreigner will find it no easy task to find his way along the *calli*. These alleys have many angles in their course, and few indeed of such angles are right angles. You may know quite well in what direction you started, but I defy anyone (without a pocket compass) to be sure of the direction in which his face is set after ten minutes' progress along the Venetian thoroughfares! An ordinary "bump of topography" is absolutely useless in this mad city where all the buildings seem to have been thrown down quite capriciously and haphazard, like toy bricks on the nursery floor of some Titan's child. Even the natives, if you should ask them the way to some object five minutes' walk distant, will probably answer politely: "I cannot explain it to the signor, but I will accompany him."

One afternoon I met at two minutes' distance

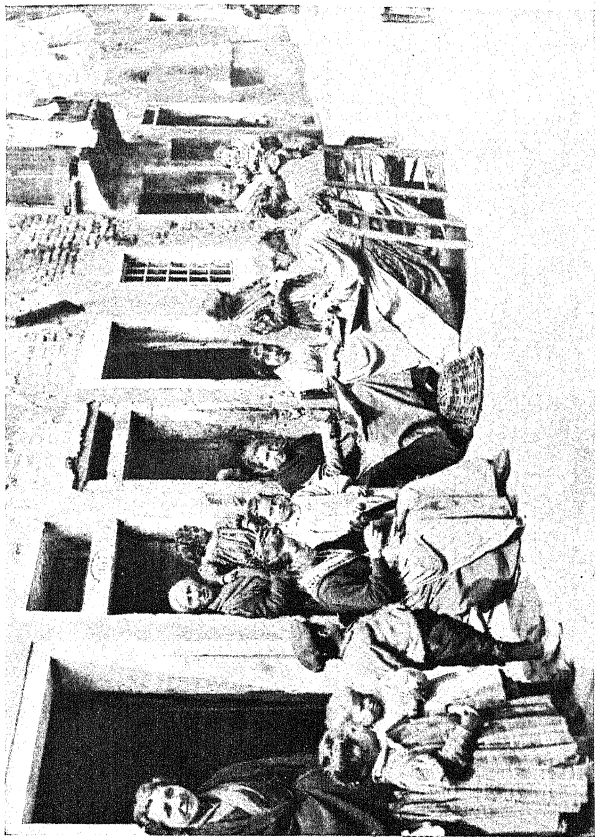
Things Seen in Venice

from S. Stefano a born Venetian who anxiously inquired of me the way to that church. When I showed him how near we were to the object of his quest, he explained his ignorance by saying, "Io sono di Castello, signor"—he belonged to the eastern division of the city, the Sestiere of Castello, so he could not be expected to possess any acquaintance with the topography of another quarter! The Municipality does its best to keep us informed; there is no lack of clearly painted instructions and directions. At every important corner, in each of the *campielli*, or *campi* (the name given to all the squares or open spaces other than the Piazza), two or three, or sometimes even four, lines of inscription explain to the instructed traveller his whereabouts. But the stranger certainly needs a little preliminary instruction, otherwise the thoughtful care of a grandmotherly Municipio will only cause him increased embarrassment. What would the uninstructed make, for instance, of an inscription such as this?—

SESTIERE DI CANNAREGGIO

PARROCHIA SS. ERMAGORA E FORTUNATO (S. MARCUOLA)

FONDAVENTA E RIO DELLA MALVASIA.



Photo

AL. FRESCO.

Ballano, St. Moritz.

The Venetian populace loves to sit out of doors, even where there is but little space.

Venice on Foot

At the risk, therefore, of tediousness, it will be wise, before committing ourselves to the sinuosities of the Venetian *calle*, to spend a moment or two on technical terms.

The city of Venice is divided—and has been divided since the twelfth century—into six sections called *sestieri*. Three of these are on the north side of the Grand Canal: Cannareggio, which includes the railway station, on the west; S. Marco in the middle, and Castello (including the Arsenal and the Public Gardens) on the east. On the other side of the Canalazzo are the *sestieri* of S. Croce (facing the railway station and verging to the west); S. Polo, occupying the central position; and Dorsoduro, a large *sestiere* which embraces not only the region lying to the south of the S. Marco end of the Grand Canal, but also, further south again, the separate island of the Giudecca.

The houses in each of these *sestieri* are numbered straight on, not according to the number of houses in a given street, or *calle*. Thus, one of a group or row of half a dozen dwellings may be the proud possessor of a numerical title which runs into four figures; there is an item

Things Seen in Venice

in the largest *sestiere*—that of Castello—which attains to the formidable total of No. 6848!

Beneath the name of the *sestiere* comes, ordinarily, that of the parish. There are in all thirty parishes in Venice, including that of S. Eufemia on the Giudecca; and many of them bear the names of little-known or quaintly disguised saints. We have already spoken of the way in which two quadrisyllabic names were transformed into the more manageable "S. Marcuola." Another instance of the same process of transformation is to be found on one of the most picturesque of the side-canals in the *sestiere* of Dorsoduro, within two minutes' walk of the Accademia, or Art Gallery. Here the two saints Gervasius and Protasius have consented to be known compactly as "S. Trovaso."

Most of the Venetian churches are approached from an open space—a little square which is invariably named after the church's patron saint. Such a square is not dignified with the name of "Piazza So-and-so," as it would be in any other Italian city; it is called "Campo," or, if it be very small, "Campiello." *Campo*

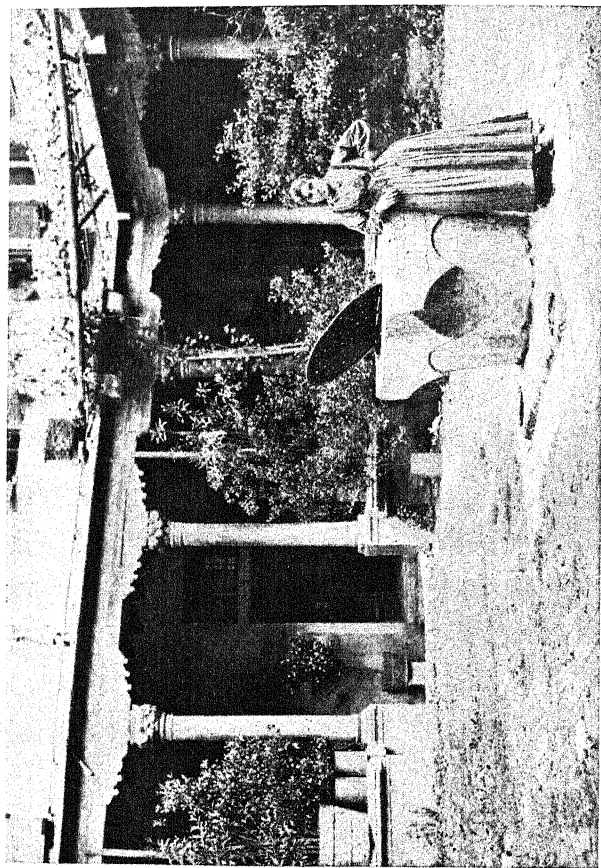
Venice on Foot

—*i.e.*, “meadow”—is a word that suggests at once Venice’s chief defect. The truth is that in former days grass did really grow in these open spaces, where now all is a wilderness of paving-stones.

These *campi* and *campielli*—especially those more remote from the more frequented canals—are well worth inspection. There one may often see Venetian life in its naïve state, watch the *popolino*—the proletariat, as we should say—enjoying itself in its own chosen ways, and hear the soft dialect to perfection. A typical *campo* of the plebeian sort is the spacious, but not very dignified, Campo S. Margherita, in the parish of S. Maria del Carmine. A few of the *campi*, like that of S. Polo, are on certain days, by permission of the authorities, converted into drying-grounds for the laundresses. All of them, without exception, become playgrounds for the children of the neighbourhood out of school hours—scenes of such incessant and strident, though good-tempered, uproar that those whose lodging abuts upon a *campo* or *campiello* are often tempted to wish that the Italian child was kept at school for more

Things Seen in Venice

hours in the day! A special feature of interest in most of the *campi* is the well-head, now supplied with splendid water by aqueduct from the mountain—a point of meeting and an excuse for gossip for many a lively and picturesque group of women. Some of the finest well-heads, from an artistic point of view, are to be found in enclosed courtyards, be it the grand quadrangle of the Ducal Palace or some secluded and forgotten *corte* in the less known parts of the city. These little *corti* have no outlet, as a rule, except the entrance, and if a stranger, moved by curiosity, or enticed by a glimpse of some unusually picturesque object, be seen to enter one, the chances are that he will be annoyed by the shouts of well-meaning but officious boys: “Non si passa! non si passa!” as much as to say, “No thoroughfare!” The same fate may overtake him, and with more reason, if he turn down a *calle*—and there are many of them—which is a *cul-de-sac*. He who is bold enough and wise enough to explore Venice on foot must be prepared for sundry false leads and momentary embarrassments; when he is just congratulating himself



Photo

A VENETIAN CORTILE.

The picturesque cortile of the Abbazia, with characteristic well-head.

Bulano, St. Moritz.

Venice on Foot

on having discovered a genuine short cut, ten to one he will find himself suddenly pulled up by green water: his cleverness has only led him to an impassable side-canal, and he must humbly retrace his steps. Not every such adventure is waste of time, however; very likely the blind alley may have introduced him to some graceful little scrap of sculpture let into a most unlikely wall, or to some pathetically cared for miniature shrine of the Madonna, not mentioned in any guide-book, nor known to the average well-informed student of Venice.

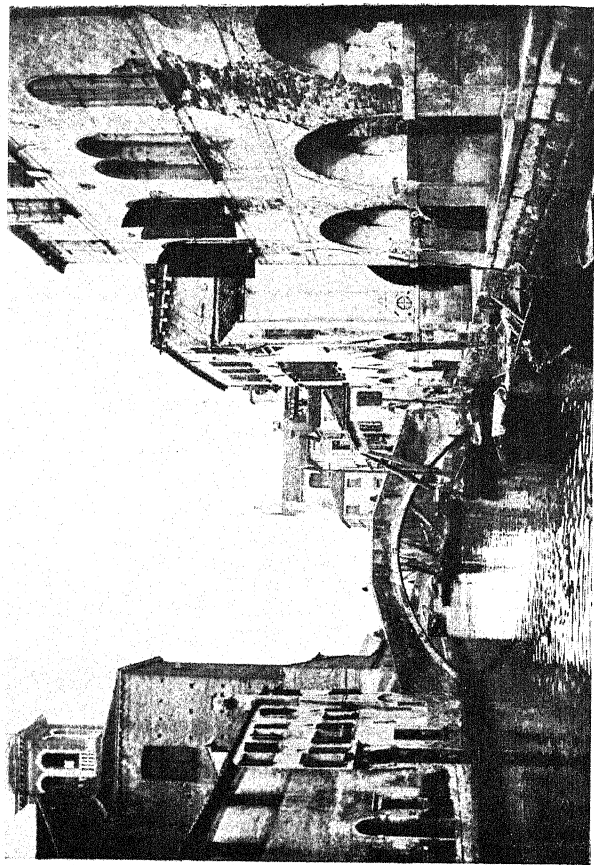
Besides *calle*, *campo*, *campiello*, and *corte*, there are various other mystic signs inscribed upon the walls. *Callesella* is the diminutive of *calle*, and is applied to a passage of even narrower proportions than the normal ones, in which two people can scarcely pass one another without touching; *sottoportico* is a name applied to a covered way, often leading into a *corte*. *Ponte*, of course, means bridge; there are between three and four hundred of them in Venice, connecting the footways on this side and that of the numberless small canals, and every bridge involves eight or a dozen stone

Things Seen in Venice

steps to be mounted by the weary pedestrian. Besides the exercise it affords to the mountaineering muscles of the walker, the Venetian bridge subserves another useful purpose; it forms a convenient landmark. "The third turn to the right after the second bridge" is a typical direction to have given one. *Rio* means a canal; *fondamenta*, a paved path or quay, which sometimes runs beside a *rio*, where the houses do not (as is often the case) rise up sheer out of the water. *Squero* is a word dear to the painter's heart, for it denotes one of the most sketchable objects in this artist's paradise—the yard or shed where gondolas are sent for their periodical cleaning and repair. Here the eye has a rest from the ubiquitous stonework of palace, bridge, and pavement; the rich, dark tones of wooden sheds are enforced when the *squero* is active by a touch of smoke and flame, backed sometimes, as in the favourite *squero* of S. Trovaso, by a refreshing mass of green bushes.

The names of the *calli* are often very quaint, and sometimes unintelligible. More often than not they record either the name of a great





BRIDGE AND "SOTTOPORTICO".²⁵

The arcade on the right (*sottoportico*) is characteristic of many side-canals.

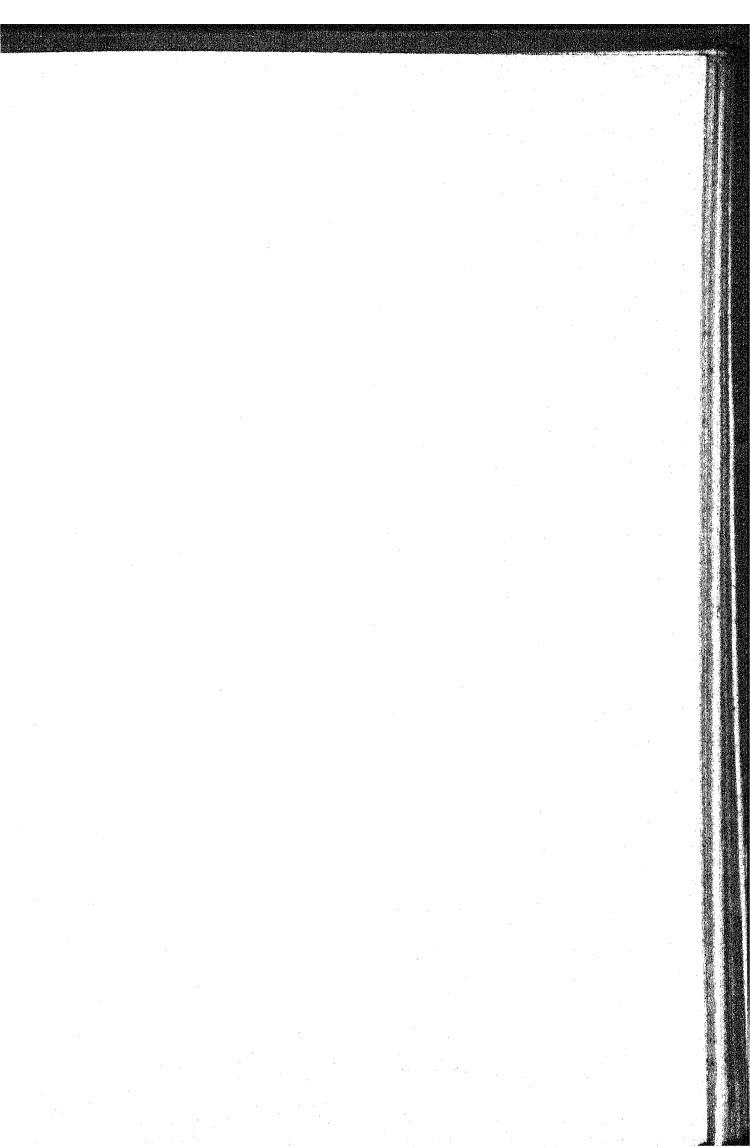
Venice on Foot

family of the neighbourhood or of an art or trade once practised there. "Calle de Magazen" is a frequently recurring title, which, however, gives us no more definite information than that there was at some time or other a *shop* in the *calle*. More specific in their teaching are names like "Calle del Pestrin" (of the Dairy-man), "del Remer" (of the Oar-maker), "della Malvasia" (of the shop where imported wines were sold), "del Fruttarol" (of the Fruit-seller), "del Caffetier" (of the Coffee-house keeper), "del Forner" (of the Baker), "del Beccher" (of the Butcher), and so forth. At least two of the busiest Venetian streets—the "Merceria" and the "I'rezzaria"—are without the surname *calle* or its equivalent. The former explains itself; the latter means a place where *arrows* were made. Sometimes the name points to a characteristic of the street itself. "Calle Larga" and "Calle Lunga" (like "Merceria") explain themselves sufficiently, and so almost does "Calle Crosera," which simply means "Cross Street." Similarly "Ponte Storta" (Crooked Bridge) is the name for a bridge which crosses the canal diagonally. Now and again a more

Things Seen in Venice

picturesque memory is enshrined in the title, as in the case of "Ponte della Guerra" (Bridge of the Battle) and "Ponte dei Pugnì" (Bridge of the Fisticuffs), both of which were scenes of the annual contests (which took place all through the Middle Ages and down to the eighteenth century) between the Castellani in the east of the city and the Nicolotti of the west—hearty faction fights which not seldom resulted in fatalities, but were sometimes tolerated, sometimes actually approved, by the authorities. "Calle del Traghetto" is a name which combines ornament with usefulness, for it enables the stranger to advance with confidence, sure that if he strikes green water at the other end he will find also the means of crossing it, and not be forced to retrace his steps under a fire of juvenile criticism.

Ruga (cf. French *rue*) is a *calle* that was lined with shops on either hand. *Ramo* is a name that frequently appears; it is applied to a "branch," or small offshoot, of a larger *calle*. *Salizzata*, which simply means a pavement or paved place, records the fact that the





Topical Press.

CANAL AND "SQUERO" OF S. TROVASO.

In the Squero the gondolas are periodically cleaned and repaired.

Venice on Foot

(usually rather broad) *calle* so named was once the principal street in its parish, and so achieved the dignity of a paved condition in the remote ages when the rest of Venice was in a state more easily imagined than described.

One other term demands a place in our working vocabulary—*piscina*—which implies that the little open space so designated is not just a *campiello*, or small square, but the site of an old fish-pond.

Certain routes which form the arteries of Venetian life and movement, like the Merceria—Venice's Bond Street—which leads from the Piazza to the neighbourhood of the Rialto; or the vastly more complicated route which conducts you (if you can trace it) from the Accademia to the railway station, are quite busy thoroughfares, especially at certain times of day. Some of the most frequented thoroughfares, like the Via Vittorio Emanuele and the Calle Larga Ventidue Marzo (March 22, 1848), both commemorating in their names the struggle for Italian liberty, have been widened to meet the necessities of modern traffic; but in the rest a motley stream of good-natured humanity jostles

Things Seen in Venice

itself amiably at exceedingly close quarters, while the few individuals whose business carries them in the unfashionable direction have as much as they can do to make any headway.

Many of the Venetian churches and other points of interest are most conveniently visited on foot; indeed, the visitor who shirks walking will almost certainly remain ignorant of some of the things most worth seeing. Such are the beautiful little *campo* and church of S. Aponal (S. Apollinaris), with its precious bit of sculpture from the demolished church of S. Elena; S. Maria Mater Domini; S. Andrea, with its typical *campo*, recalling the old days when these *campi* had a right to the name of "meadows," and other spots, too numerous for mention, some of which cannot be very comfortably approached in gondola, while others gain in the dramatic force of their impressiveness when approached on foot.

Then there are recognized promenades, where gentle exercise can be combined with the joy of a sun-bath and the edification of a little sight-seeing if desired. The famous Riva degli Schiavoni—commonly called for short, "the

Venice on Foot

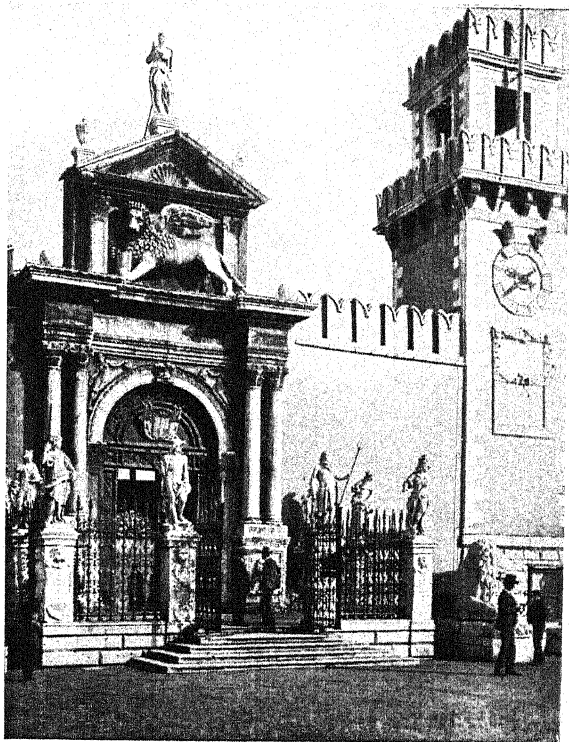
Riva"—is the noblest and most popular of these promenades. As you walk along it, you have the continuous prospect of the Bacino di S. Marco, with its shipping, the fine group of the Custom House and church of the Salute in the middle distance to one side, and in the background the long line of the Giudecca, the island of S. Giorgio Maggiore in the centre, with its striking outline of church and convent buildings; and, at the other extreme, a distant view of the Lido—Venice's natural breakwater—and its attendant islands. On its landward side, meanwhile, the Riva gives access directly or through side-passages to numberless points of interest: the church of S. Zaccaria, the small chapel of the Slavonian Fraternity, adorned with Carpaccio's masterpieces, the Greek church with its leaning tower, the old granaries of the Republic—abutting on the Riva itself—now converted by a compassionate city to serve as a nightly shelter for the homeless poor; and above all, the famous Arsenal with Grecian Lions on its portal, the busy scene, as Dante records, of Venice's shipbuilding in the days of her naval greatness. A longer walk in the same direction

Things Seen in Venice

will bring the pedestrian to the Public Gardens, one of the few beneficent traces of Napoleon's domination, a green refuge from the desert of stone, brick, and water, or to the church of S. Pietro in Castello—till Napoleon's day the cathedral—at the easternmost point of the city. Beyond the Public Gardens, again, an open breezy meadow walk is offered by the adjacent island of S. Elena.

The Zattere is another delightful promenade, radiant with sunshine on a frosty winter's day ; resplendent with sunset glow on any fine evening. The Venetian sunsets should be viewed by every one from the Zattere on foot, and from the Bacino and different parts of the Lagoon in gondola.

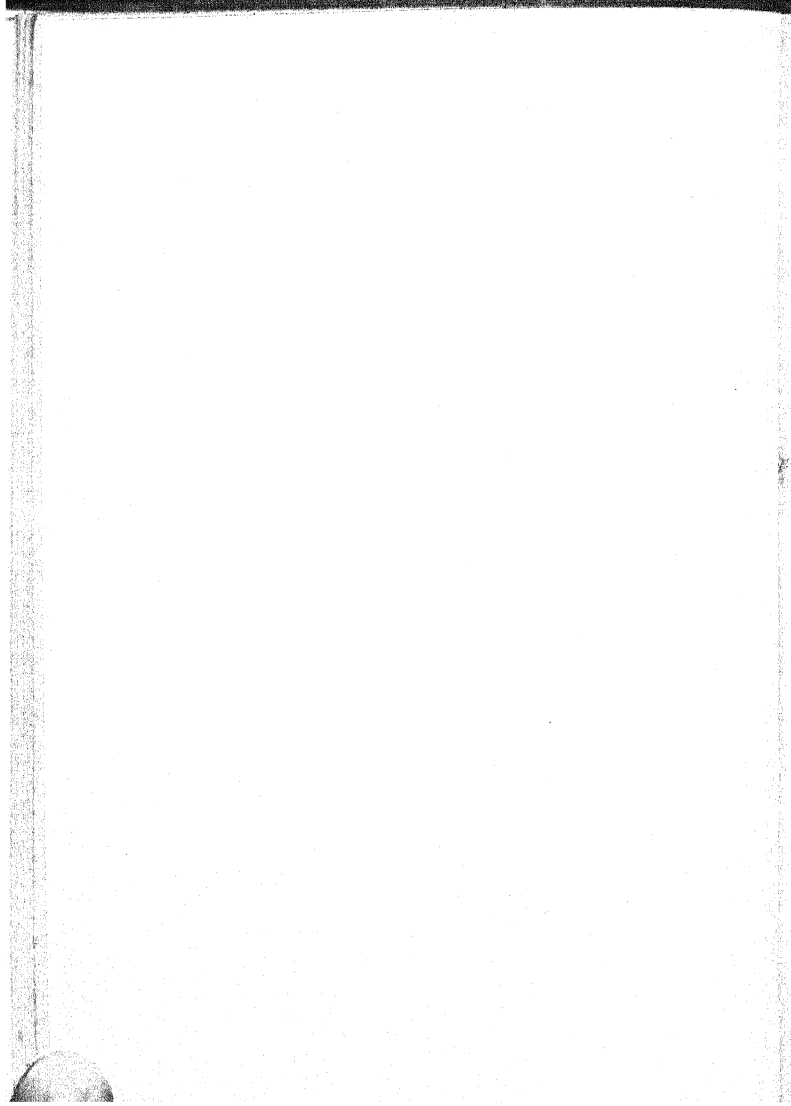
Facing the Zattere, on the other side of the wide Giudecca Canal, is another long promenade, running practically the whole length of the island of that name. This *fondamenta* does not attract the general run of visitors ; partly because, facing north, it lies for a large part of the day in the shade (a recommendation, surely, on a hot, sultry day), and partly because its buildings are mean and squalid compared with those on



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ENTRANCE TO THE ARSENAL.

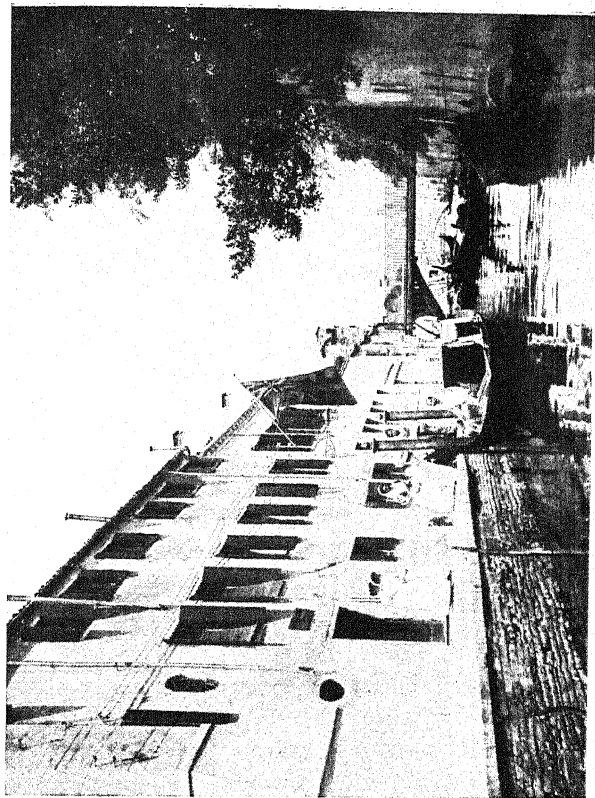


Venice on Foot

the other side of the water. English visitors are apt to confine their attention to the important church of the Redentore, and to the altogether charming little English hospital (Ospedale Cosmopolitano) close by, where they are sure of a warm English welcome from the matron and her efficient staff. But if it were only for the long straight "sprint" it offers in a city of narrow lanes with countless turns, this *fondamenta* of the Giudecca would appeal to the Englishman whose "constitutional" is almost a part of his creed. The promenade affords, moreover, a most varied and comprehensive view both of the shipping, which crowds more and more thickly every year into the Giudecca Canal, and of the "Heart of Venice" on the other bank. Nor is the view of the Lagoon from the far side of the island to be despised. The little terrace on the roof of the English hospital forms a magnificent point of vantage. To the east, just across the narrow Rio della Croce, it is flanked by the refreshing green mass of Mr. Eden's spacious garden, with its endless rows of lilies and bowers of roses; to the north the outline of the Redentore church

Things Seen in Venice

leads the eye on to an extended and general view of Venice ; while southwards and westward more gardens shape themselves into a foreground for the loveliest and dreamiest vista of outspread water and magic floating islands, backed by the far-off mountains of Padua, too coy to show themselves except just now and again.



OSPEDALE COSMOPOLITANO : THE ENGLISH HOSPITAL ON THE GIUDECCA (RIO S. CROCE).

The matron and two nurses are on the quay, and Lady Layard's gondola is moored at the steps.

CHAPTER V

THE LAGOON

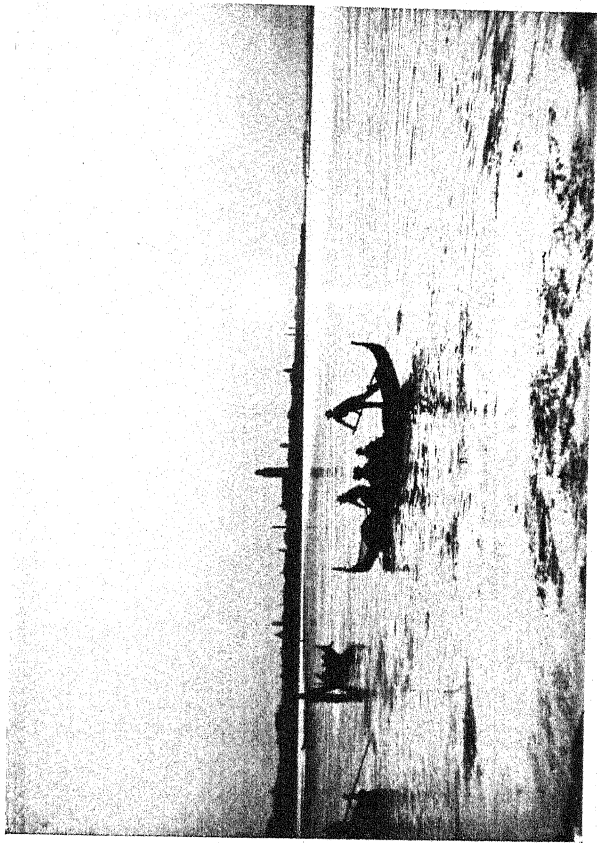
VENICE has been styled the gem of the Adriatic; the Lagoon is the beautiful setting to this jewel. Without the Lagoon, indeed, Venice could not exist at all; its ruin would begin speedily on the first stormy day. For the Lagoon, with its long fringe of Lido islands, and its five *porti*, or openings, which admit a regular ebb and flow of tide, protects the city at once from the boisterous Adriatic and from the internal perils of stagnation and malaria. In earlier days defence was needed also from the assaults of human foes; and this is amply provided by the treacherous sandbanks which guard the openings on the seaward side and the intricate system of mudbanks which the inrush and outflowing of the tide has formed within. Someone has said of Nature that while she works like a machine she sleeps all the while

Things Seen in Venice

like a picture. This is pre-eminently true of the Venetian Lagoon. All day long she is hard at work, cleansing by means of her tidal movements the waterways of the thickly populated city, chasing away unimaginable perils of deadly disease by her unfailing sanitary activity ; morning, noon, and night she looks so serenely fair that the enchanted gazer might be tempted to believe that her one purpose in life was to look beautiful.

No one who desires to understand the inner character and working of this vast sheet of water, the product of the interaction of the sea, the Lido islands and the rivers, should fail to read the first chapter of Mr. Horatio Brown's "Life on the Lagoons." There he will find expressed in charming language, by one who has made the Lagoon his home, the inner truth of the matter.

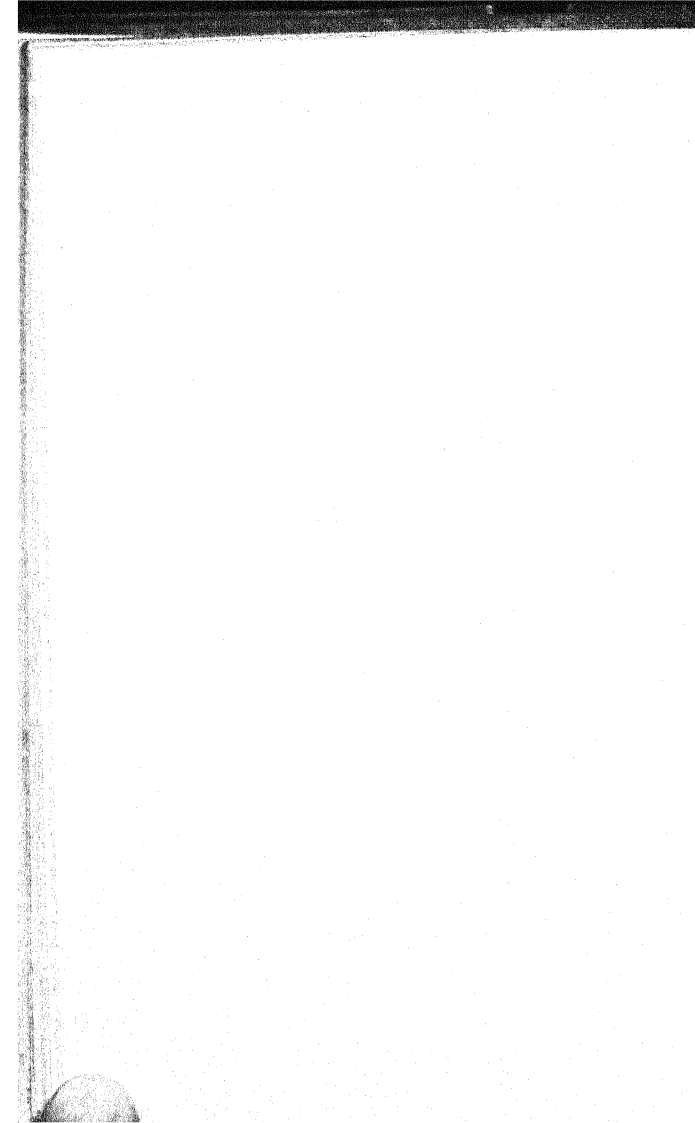
This expanse of protected water—estimated, says Mr. Horatio Brown, to cover a surface of no less than 160 geographical miles—contains numberless points of interest. There are not a few islands specially worth visiting for their picturesqueness or for their historical associa-



Topical Press.

"THE SWAN OF THE LAGOON."

Gondola traversing the northern lagoon, on its way from Murano to the Fondamente Nuove.



The Lagoon

tions. To the north and east of Venice proper there spreads out a long train of islands, of which the first is San Michele, the cemetery, and the last Torcello, with its very ancient basilica, once the mother church of Venice. Between these lie Murano and Burano. The former is the seat of the famous glassmaking industry for which Venice was celebrated in the Middle Ages, and is celebrated again to-day; famous, too, for its glorious church of SS. Maria and Donato, and for the fine Bellini picture which adorns the other church of St. Peter Martyr. The latter is a miniature Venice, in which the march of civilization has not produced such deplorable results as those which mark the more beaten tracks of the tourist. Here you shall find (besides, and in spite of, the lace-making industry) a people—I will not say absolutely unsophisticated and unspoiled—but at any rate more ready to wear characteristic costumes, and less aggressive in the art of touting.

Of Torcello everyone should read Ruskin's glowing account in the "Stones of Venice"; everyone who is not hindered by physical in-

Things Seen in Venice

firmity should ascend the old Lombardic Campanile and drink in the incomparable view it offers of the far-stretching Lagoon and distant Venice.

“Far as the eye can reach, a waste of wild sea-moor, of a lurid ashen-grey; not like our Northern moors, with their jet-black pools and purple heath, but lifeless, the colour of sack-cloth. . . . No gathering of fantastic mists, nor coursing of clouds across it; but melancholy clearness of space in the warm sunset, oppressive, reaching to the horizon of its level gloom. To the very horizon, on the north-east; but, to the north and west, there is a blue line of higher land along the border of it, and above this, but farther back, a misty band of mountains, touched with snow. To the east, the paleness and roar of the Adriatic . . . to the south, the widening branches of the calm Lagoon, alternately purple and pale green. . . . Beyond the widening branches of the Lagoon, and rising out of the bright lake into which they gather, there are a multitude of towers, dark, and scattered among square-set shapes of clustered palaces, a long irregular line fretting the

The Lagoon

southern sky. Mother and daughter, you behold them both in their widowhood—Torcello and Venice.”

Torcello one sees at one's feet, “a group of four buildings, two of them little larger than cottages.” The interior of the larger church is strangely impressive, both in its antique arrangements and in its “solemn mosaics”; while the small chapel of Santa Fosca near by is in its way a perfect architectural gem.

Eastward of this line of islands—north-east of Murano and almost due south of Torcello, not far from the Litorale di S. Erasmo, which forms the breakwater of the Lagoon on the north of the “port of Lido”—lies the extremely picturesque island of S. Francesco del Diserto, where a still existing Franciscan monastery marks the traditional spot where the great founder of the Order spent some time in solitary and penitential meditation.

Wonderful is the prospect of this northern lagoon from the Fondamente Nuove; best of all, perhaps, near the Sacco della Misericordia, with its piles of logs backed by the lonely and mysterious “Casa degli Spiriti,” whose Anglo-

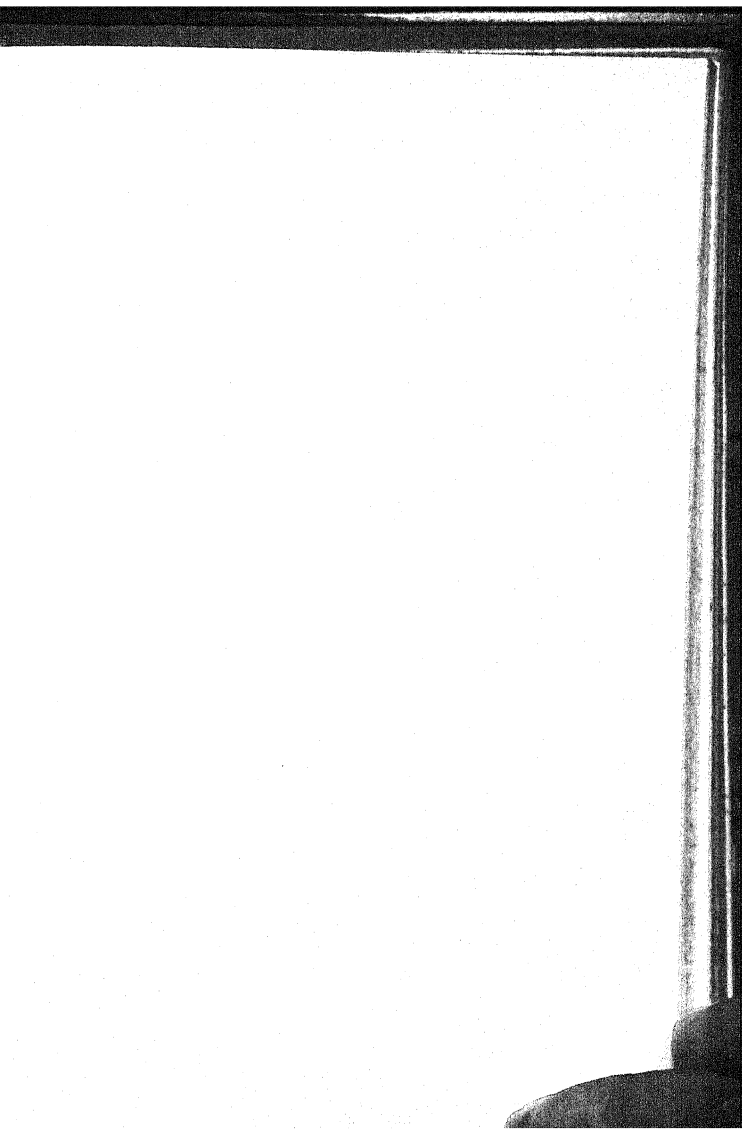
Things Seen in Venice

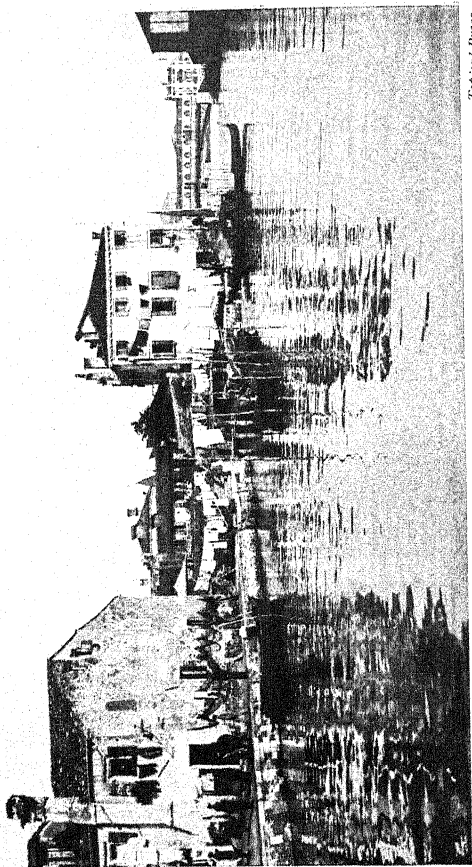
Saxon owner has meritoriously restored to its pristine beauty the neighbouring Contarini garden.

To the west, on the side where the long railway viaduct spans the Lagoon, a number of small islets lie dotted about, apparently floating upon the surface of the water; pleasant spots, these, for a fine day's picnic. Prominent among the islands of the eastern lagoon is S. Giorgio in Alga (St. George of the Seaweed), and though its present-day use as a powder-magazine renders the shore of this historic isle a forbidden land, its picturesqueness and the lingering charm of its former human interest still invite the lover of beauty to moor his gondola close under its shadow.

Of its ancient glory, however, there remains little but a fine old wall, from which the figure of the "Madonna of the Parasol," quaint and graceful, if of small artistic value, watches the passing of the new-fangled *vaporini* and the old-fashioned fishing-boats.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century this island belonged to a congregation of Canons, one of whom was a famous Venetian bishop,





Topical Press.

AT THE GIUDECCA.

This shows the Giudecca's broadest canal : in the distance is the Fondamenta delle Zattere.

The Lagoon

St. Lorenzo Giustiniani. The conventual buildings, with their garniture of fine pictures and their famous library, were all destroyed by fire in the early years of the eighteenth century, when the property had passed into the hands of the Carmelites.

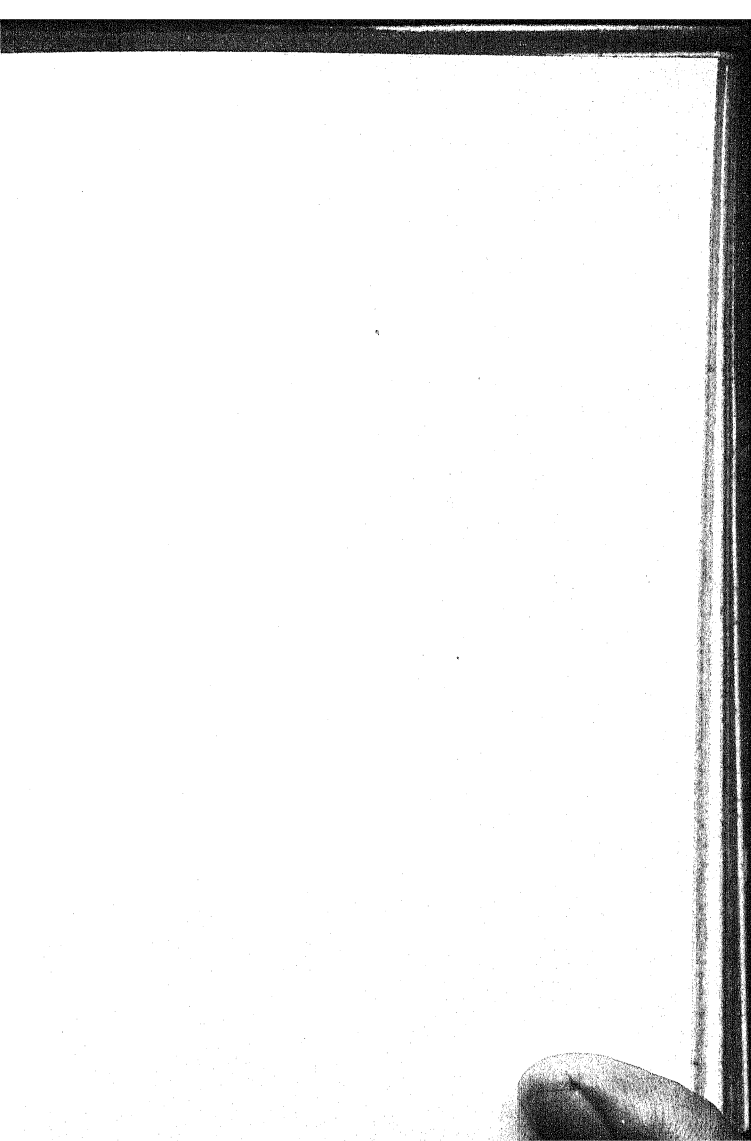
The railway viaduct itself, so prominent a feature of this western lagoon, acquires a certain dignity from its sheer length ; two miles and a half of uniform arcading, broken only here and there where a tiny island has been pressed into the service of the engineer's art. Nor should its utilitarian and commonplace associations obscure for us its memories of heroism and pathos. This bridge was the scene of many a doughty deed in the days of the great siege of 1849, when, for five months, the city under her last Doge, Daniele Manin, stood out single-handed against the power of Austria, only to capitulate when, in the burning heat of August, the horrors of cholera had been added to those of famine and bombardment.

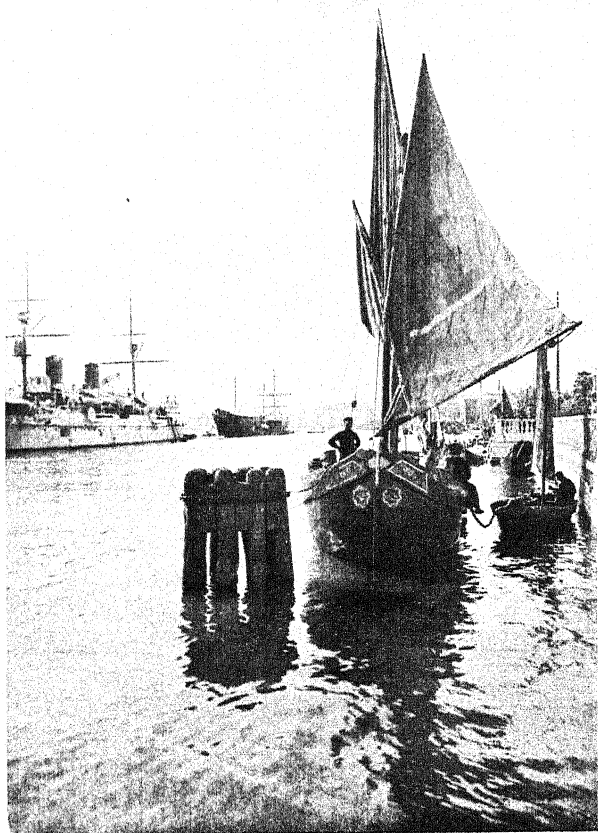
The bridge itself bears testimony to its glorious past in the monument erected to Agostino Stefani, whose story is surely one of the most

Things Seen in Venice

pathetic on record. During the siege the Venetians laid a mine to blow up the railway bridge, some distance from the city. For some reason or other the mine did not explode. Agostino then came forward and volunteered to row off in his *sandolo* and set the matter right. General Cosenz accepted the noble offer, and the young man set forth, in face of a double fire, from Malghera and from S. Giuliano. He reached the place unscathed, and accomplished his work, but had scarcely turned his prow homewards when an Austrian cannon-shot sunk his little boat under him.

To swim ashore was no light task, for the current was against him; but the sense of achievement, and the inspiration of an anticipated hero's welcome, gave him courage, and just as his strength was exhausted a passing Venetian patrol boat picked him up. Alas! his rescuers mistook the speechless man for an Austrian spy, and an excited crowd on the bank began to shower stones upon the boat which was thought to contain such an object of execration. The people on the boat then actually threw the poor fellow back into the water, and





Photo

Ballance, St. Moritz.

WAR AND PEACE.

Ironclad and fishing-boat moored off the Public Gardens.

The Lagoon

he was overwhelmed with blows of oars and stones ere General Cosenz could come up to identify and rescue him.

On this western side of Venice the manifold connection with the mainland is effected not only by the railway. The all-important water-supply — *l'acquedotto* — finds its way along the bed of the western lagoon, and in this direction lie the two steamer routes to the mainland which still compete with the *ferrovia*. One can go from the Riva or from the Zattere by steamer, past S. Giorgio in Alga, to Fusina; or from near the Rialto up the Grand Canal and the Cannareggio to Mestre, along the northern side of the railway bridge. On a fine day the trip to Mestre, whether taken by steamer or, more leisurely and luxuriously, in gondola, affords splendid views of the mountains of the Cadore, whose snow-capped peaks form a lovely background to the vast expanse of water. A trip to Fusina is also well worth while, the more as this little port on the mouth of the Brenta gives access to a light railway which follows that river's windings past a quaint series of villas and villages as far as Padua, from which point,

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if time presses, the return journey may be made by express train to Venice.

To the south of Venice the Lagoon stretches out for many a mile, till the extreme point is reached at Brondolo, just beyond Chioggia. To the east extends the long reef of defence against the Adriatic, the Lido, the *litorale* of Malamocco, and that of Chioggia, a rampart broken in two places—at the port of Malamocco, and at that of Chioggia. Along the western side of this portion of the Lagoon stretches the low-lying coast, fringed by the Laguna Morta, or Dead Lagoon, with its salt marshes and semi-stagnant pools. Islands are dotted here and there in this expanse of protected water between the Lido rampart and the salt marshes of the Laguna Morta, streaming off from the central group which constitutes Venice proper in ever diminishing density, as though they had been flung athwart the lagoon by a giant hand. S. Servolo and La Grazia, comparatively near to the Giudecca island and to S. Giorgio Maggiore ; S. Clemente (the *manicomio*, or madhouse), and S. Lazzaro, with the convent of the genial and hospitable

The Lagoon

Armenian (Uniat) Fathers a little further off, and then, in a far-scattered line, S. Spirito, Poveglia, and S. Pietro in Volta. In old days practically all the islands of the Lagoon were inhabited, each being the property of a separate conventual body. We may picture the great waste of waters dotted with little centres of culture, praise, and intercession. The majority of them have now lost the main part of their buildings; the well-kept garden has disappeared, and the church adorned with its treasures, and sometimes valuable pictures. The islands themselves remain, and, seen from a distance or from near by, with the picturesque outlines of the buildings which adorn most of them, they are of immense value in the landscape, furnishing a foreground or a middle distance, giving interest to what would otherwise be, with all its beauty, an unrelieved expanse of watery flatness, and aiding the eye in its instinctive search for a guide to perspective in the bewildering vastness of the Lagoon. Some of them are still well worth a visit for their intrinsic interest; each of them adds something to the indescribable charm of the prospect westward across the

Things Seen in Venice

shining waters towards the distant Euganean Hills.

But for most visitors the long rampart of the Lido islands is more conspicuously attractive than its attendant islets. The name "Lido" (it is simply the Latin *litus*, "coast") is more especially applied to the part of this rampart that lies nearest to Venice. Once it was a picturesque

". . . bare strand
Of hillocks heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds," . . .

an uninhabited seaside where it was exhilarating to ride and walk. Now—*quantum mutatus ab illo*—it is a fashionable, commonplace bathing resort, crammed in the summer with bathers herded in monster hotels, or lodged in frightful little mushroom villas. These monstrous growths have something of the sinister gaiety of the fungus race: the villas are apt to be decorated—and sometimes, alas! to be constructed—in the style of the "New Art," while the bathers who inhabit them are dressed according to the *dernier cri* of Rome and Paris. The shore, too thickly studded with amorphous

The Lagoon

bathing-huts, is extremely ugly—till the shades of evening have converted them all into flat grey shadows seen against a sky still bright with the afterglow of sunset. Nothing, however, can destroy the view landwards from the Lido—a view, happily, to be enjoyed from many points, but perhaps best of all (by a strange irony) from the terrace of that colossus of a new hotel in which the spirit of *Art Nouveau* is personified. In early summer mornings, or on fine still evenings, this view over Venice is of magical and unearthly loveliness.

S. Nicolo del Lido stands at the north end of this island, in a truly delightful spot, where the greenest grass within miles of Venice supplies the city's one great defect: where "wide green meadows" are "bounded by a hedge where the blackthorn blossoms, and watered by lazy-flowing watercourses that counterfeit an English stream," while "the path that leads from the meadows is flanked by poplar trees, and is deep and cool as an English lane." The church is dedicated to S. Nicholas of Bari, of whom the mariners of old Venice always craved a blessing when they put to sea and when they

Things Seen in Venice

returned home, laden or not, as the case might be, with the spoils of the East.

It is still worth a visit, if only for its historical associations, but to the English pilgrim the military fortress has a peculiar attraction, if he succeeds in obtaining leave to penetrate within its lines. For here are the tombstones of a little group of Englishmen, not very illustrious nor very obscure in themselves, but evoking a feeling of real pathos, by reason of the lonely and inaccessible nature of their resting-place, from which a determined effort was made a few years ago to obtain leave to remove the remains, and have them interred in consecrated ground; but the combined efforts of English and German promoters of this movement (for there are German tombs also at S. Nicolo) failed to penetrate the cordon of red tape, though permission for a special visit was acceded, on terms known only to the English Chaplain, and the English Consul. These foreign residents of a former century, among whom are Sir Francis Vincent, a scion of the House of Sackville, and a certain "Consul Smith," to whom Windsor Castle owes not a

The Lagoon

few of its art treasures, were interred in unconsecrated ground, before a section of the present cemetery was set apart for the burial of *Acattolici*, as the local authorities compactly describe all believers in any or no creed who reject the jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff.

Southwards from S. Nicolo, the long, narrow island stretches past the fashionable bathing area and the monster hotels into a region of solitude little altered from that congenial waste in which Byron and Shelley rode together. Here the keen pedestrian may indeed stretch his legs. Splendid air and splendid views of the Lagoon and distant Venice, and the still more distant mountains on the one side, and the purple Adriatic on the other, lure him on past Malamocco till, at the fort of Alberoni, he is brought to a halt, where the opening of Porto di Malamocco interrupts the continuity of the natural breakwater, nearly halfway to Chioggia.

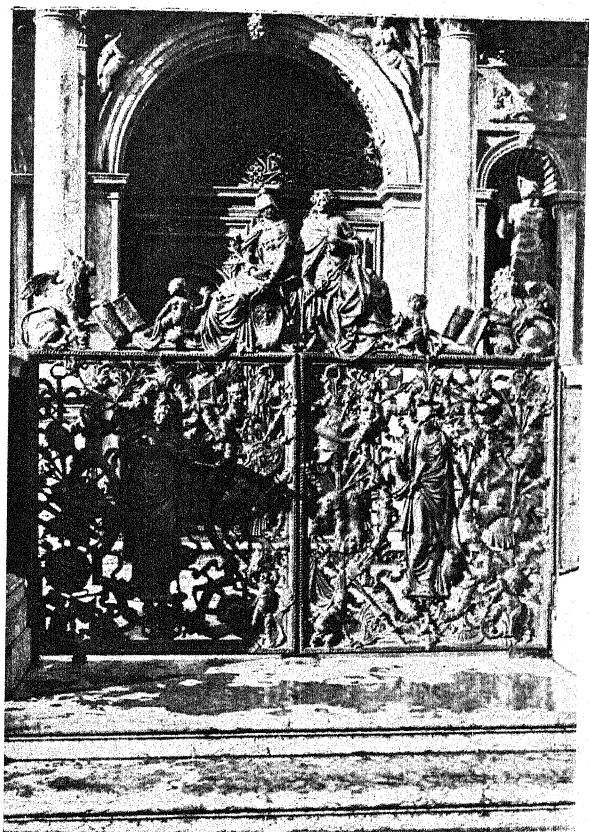
Chioggia itself he must approach by steamer, and a fine day's trip it is, bright with the gorgeous colouring of the sails of the fishing boats, which in high noon strive to equal in

Things Seen in Venice

brilliance the sunset-tinted vapours in which Venice will be seen swathed on the return journey. The call at Malamocco and Pellestrina, which the boat makes on the way, gives the visitor a glimpse and a foretaste of the characteristic picturesqueness of the ancient fishing port of Chioggia—so memorable in history, yet above all acceptable to the jaded sightseer to-day because he is on holiday, and means to give himself for a few hours at least to lazy contemplation of outside things—form and colour and human nature.

As one traverses the wide spaces of the Lagoon, the eye is not so incessantly distracted towards swiftly passing objects of interest; it has leisure, at last, to rest upon the delightful and, indeed, unique means of transport which will always be inseparably associated with the Lagoon in the visitor's memory.

The gondola is apt to be "taken for granted" after the initial pleasure and surprise of introduction. But it merits study. In the first place, it is an essentially Venetian boat, the child of the Lagoon, gradually evolved in the course of ages by successive stages, many

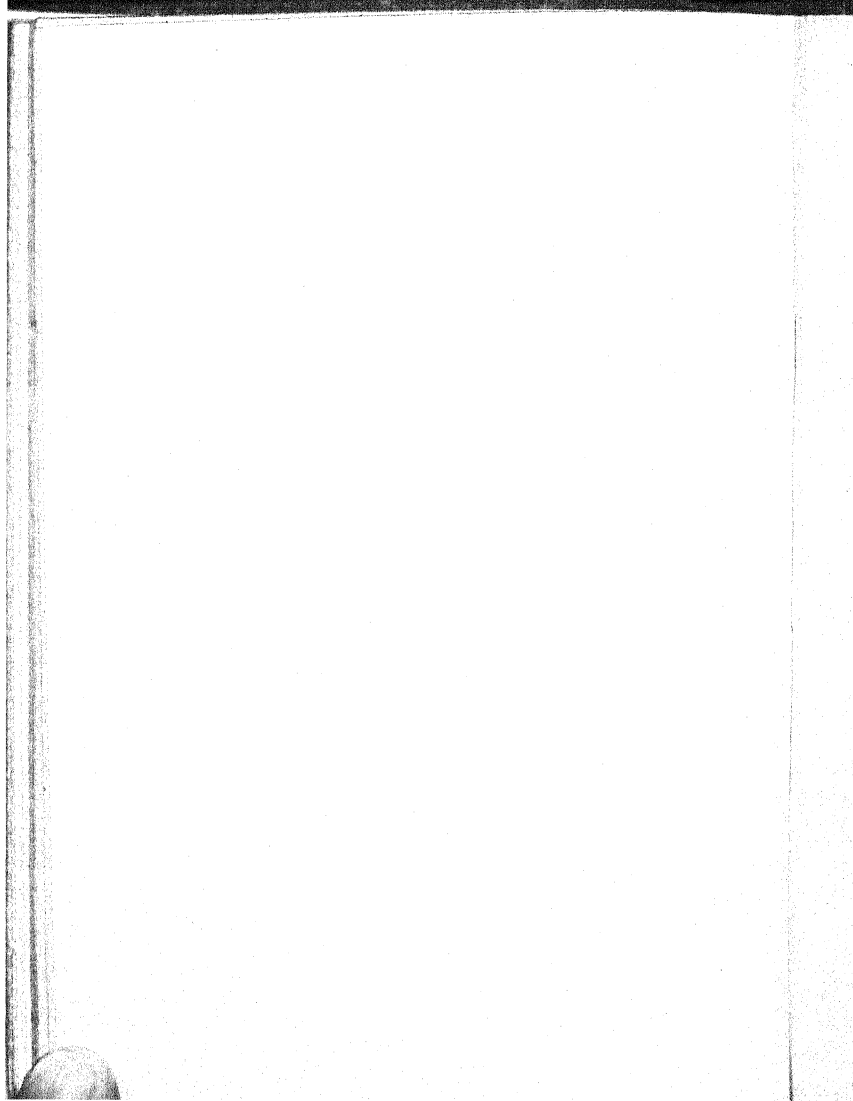


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**BRONZE GATES OF THE LOGGIETTA OF SANSOVINO, AT THE
FOOT OF THE GREAT CAMPANILE.**

The Loggia was destroyed with the fall of the Campanile, but will be
reconstructed.



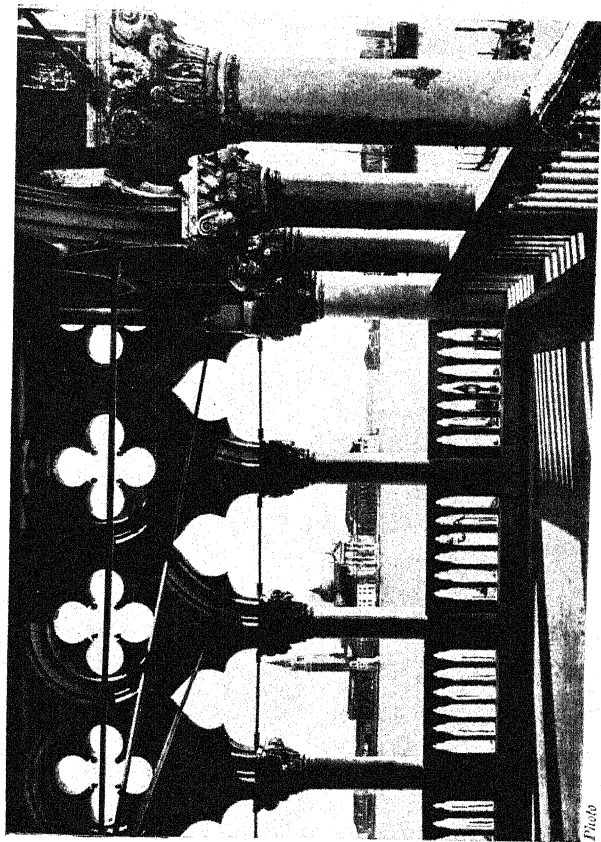
The Lagoon

of which can still be traced. It is the lineal descendant of the light skiff which Cassiodorus, secretary of Theodoric, saw tied to the doors of the rude Venetian dwellings of the early sixth century. These skiffs probably resemble most nearly the little boat now called *barchetta* and Mr. Horatio Brown, in the volume already referred to, has traced the gradual evolution of the perfect gondola of to-day from this rudimentary *barchetta* form. Visitors to the Accademia will observe in the Venetian scenes by Bellini and Carpaccio a middle stage in this development depicted. The early sixteenth-century gondola resembles the modern one in many points—but it lacks the *ferro*—the picturesque polished iron beak which gives it much of its swan-like quality. The *felze*—the little wooden house in which the gondola passengers are enclosed when protection from the outer elements or from human gaze is desired—is itself the outcome of a long process of evolution. At one time it was made a subject of excessive display, and many sumptuary laws were passed to restrain the extravagances of wealthy citizens. The Government found it

Things Seen in Venice

very difficult to enforce the regulation that every *felze* was to be covered only with coarse black cloth; but they persevered, only relaxing the law in favour of foreign ambassadors, with the funereal result that is visible in the *felze* of to-day. By the middle of the eighteenth century the gondola of contemporary pictures was like the present one—long, for speed, with one *ferro* hatchet-shaped, and a black *felze* with door and windows.

Besides its metals—iron, steel, and brass—sometimes as many as five different kinds of wood enter into the composition of the gondola—walnut, cherry, elm, pine, and oak, not counting the beechwood of the oars. And every piece is most carefully selected; it must be “well seasoned and without knots.” When the boat is finished it is a joy to look upon, as well as a luxury to sit in; but its graceful lines are not without a certain subtle want of symmetry. Nor is this unsymmetrical build the product of happy-go-lucky methods such as seem to belong to certain types of Italian work; on the contrary, it is carefully and deliberately planned.



Atyra, l'entree.

LOGGIA OF THE DOGE'S PALACE,
Looking across the Bacino di S. Marco to S. Giorgio Maggiore.

Photo

The Lagoon

The boat is without helm ; it is to be guided and propelled by a single oar, and that in face of wind and tide ; it must be ready to respond to the slightest motion of its oarsman, to advance in a straight line, to negotiate any angle, to spin round, if required, on its own axis. It is built with a perceptible list to one side, to balance the weight of him who stands on its poop, and to counteract the bias of his one oar's impetus it is built with one side longer and more curved than the other.

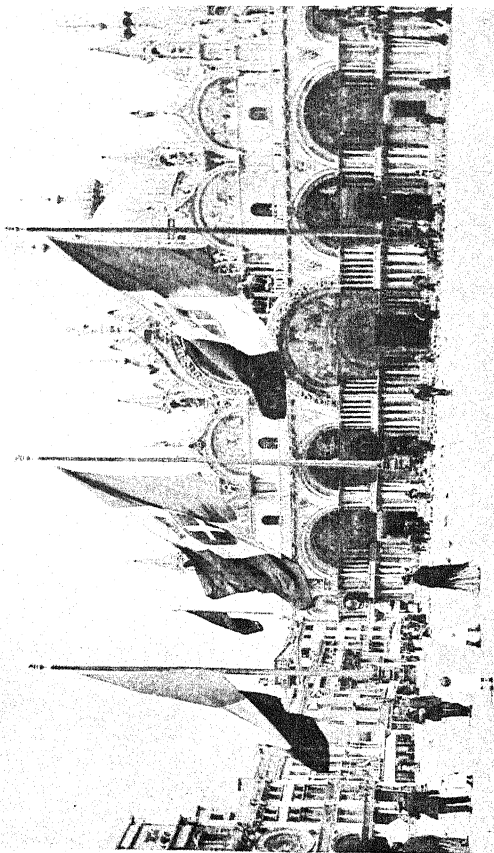
The result is the Swan of the Lagoon, the most graceful and the most comfortable carriage that can be conceived.

Things Seen in Venice

new and strange to the Northern visitor, and apt to remain in his memory as among the most interesting of the "things seen in Venice."

Let us begin with a Christmas Eve visit to the fair on the Rialto Bridge, where booths are erected for the purveyance of cheap dainties, cheap finery, cheap articles of daily use—things appealing not to the rich, who can go to the shops in the Merceria, but to the poor who may have a few pence to spare when the Christmas marketing is done. Sometimes on these stalls the writer has found little pieces of Venetian glass at the lowest of prices. They have some slight flaw—a tiny moulding is chipped, a dragon or sea-horse has come out imperfect from the fire, or a vase, exquisite in shape, does not hold water—so, after brief bargaining, they may be bought for a quarter of the usual retail price.

Lower down in the market there is abundance of provisions and a gay throng of buyers. The stalls where geese, turkeys, and capons are sold are scenes of lively, characteristic bargaining. Flowers from the Riviera are plentiful, and little



Photo

ST. MARK'S ON A FESTIVAL.

Ballance, St. Moritz.

Fasts and Festivals

Christmas-trees are attracting the attention of many a paterfamilias. In the early morning hours the vendors of fish do a roaring trade, for Christmas Eve is a vigil strictly observed, and by midday the Fishmarket is almost depleted.

Towards six in the evening the human tide sets towards St. Mark's, for there, by a unique use, the first Mass of Christmas Day is celebrated about half-past six on Christmas Eve.* I say *advisedly about*, for in Venice a great vagueness prevails as to the time of any function, and a given hour is customarily announced with a qualifying *circa* ("about").

This Christmas Mass is one of the most beautiful services of the year. The sole lighting of the nave is the soft radiance streaming from a great suspended cross of beaten iron, the frame of which supports vast numbers of primitive lamps—mere glasses filled with oil in

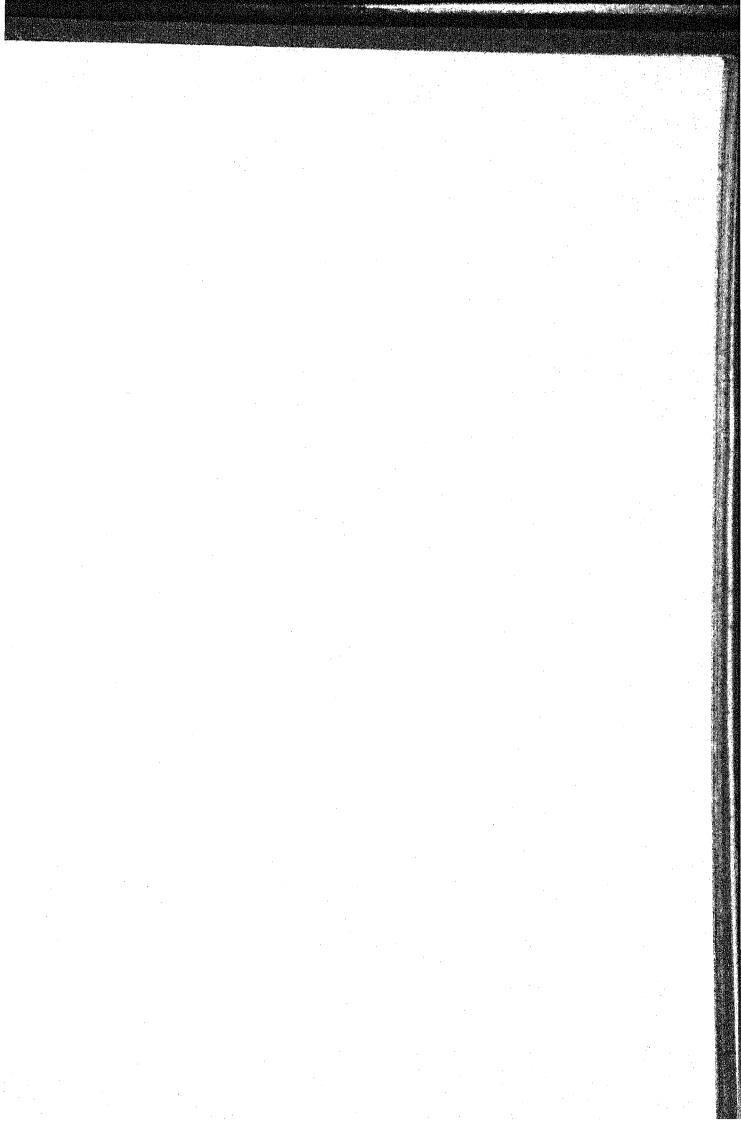
* Doubtless this use dates from an ancient method of beginning the day at the hour of the evening Ave Maria. Half-past six on Christmas Eve would, by this reckoning, be the first hour of Christmas Day. The Venetians continued to use this style of counting till the Napoleonic Conquest.

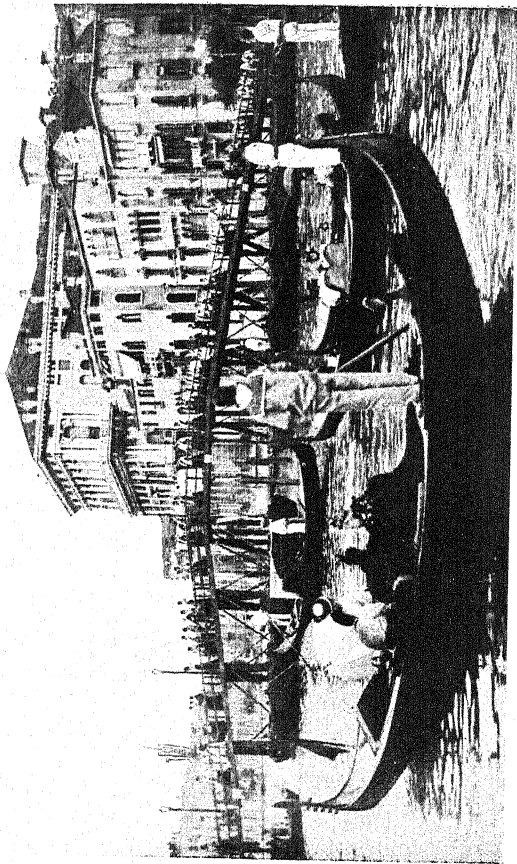
Things Seen in Venice

which are floats and wicks; but the High-Altar is ablaze with candles, and gleaming with the solid gold of the Pala d' Oro.

The body of the church is packed with standing worshippers of every age and class. Privileged persons and early comers find seats in the chancel facing the altar. The choir-stalls are filled with the Canons of St. Mark's in their ermine tippets. The Patriarch is the celebrant. Then from somewhere on high in the dim vault of the dome comes an outburst of song—the thrilling, imperative summons of the “Adeste Fideles.” The music usually heard in St. Mark's is not very remarkable, and Venetian voices, affected doubtless by sea-mists and northerly winds, have a very different timbre from the liquid, sonorous tones of Southern throats; but the disposition of the singers in a gallery to the left above the chancel, entirely hidden from the nave, joined with the marvellous effects of light and colour in the wonderful building, produce an indescribable impression upon the worshipper on Christmas Eve.

The function ended, the Venetian begins to greet his acquaintance long before he leaves the





Topical Press.

THE BRIDGE OF ST. ANTHONY'S DAY.

On certain festivals a temporary wooden bridge is thrown across the Grand Canal.

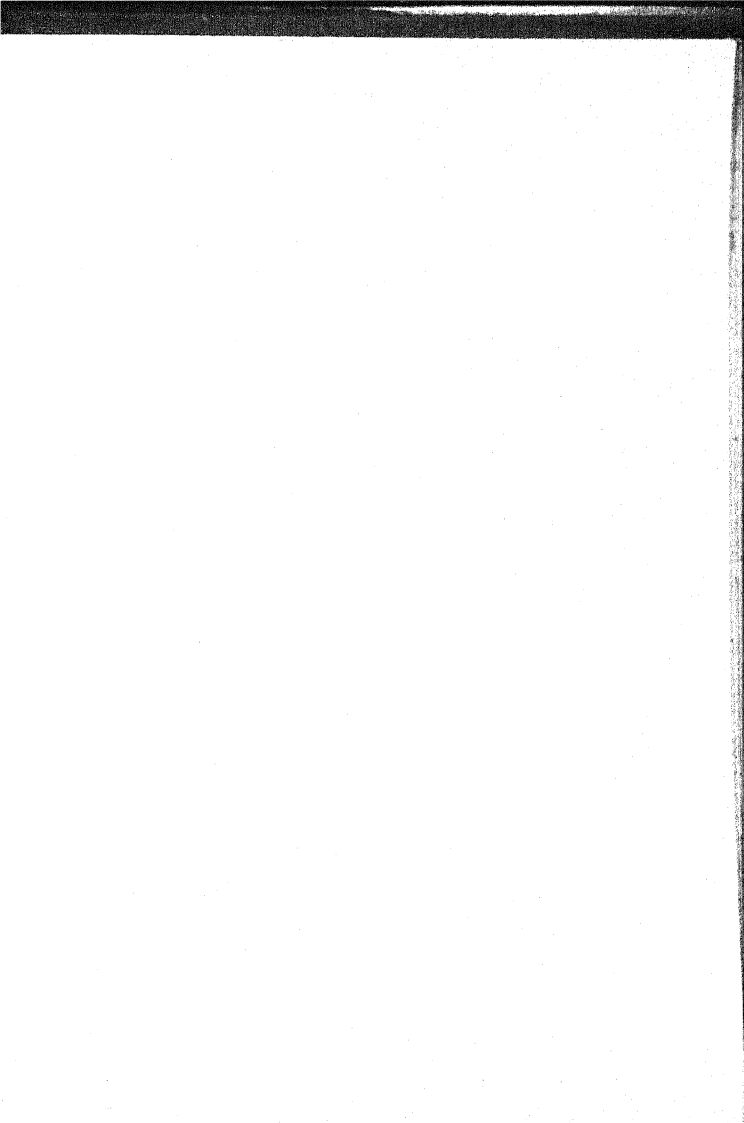
Fasts and Festivals

church. Then he probably takes a turn or two in the Piazza, after which he goes home to sup on a *maigre* soup, a little fish, a vegetable, some *mostarda*, and some almond *nougat*. These latter are his mince-pies and plum-pudding, the distinctive *plats* of the Christmas season. *Mostarda* is a delicious apple sauce, sometimes mixed with candied fruits, and always flavoured with warm and pungent spices; the *nougat* is made with honey, and is rather nauseating in its sweetness.

Once upon a time the Venetians went a-masking whenever they chose throughout the period of carnival—i.e., from Epiphany to Ash Wednesday. A scrap of white satin or black velvet on the face, with a black hood over head and shoulders, abolished all social *convenances*, all class distinctions, and the mask was generally held to be "the finest commodity in the world." Now, save for sporadic bands of children sporting on Sunday in the Piazza, "Sior Maschera" rarely shows himself before Shrove Tuesday. That evening all Venice is abroad; a band plays, and there is often dancing on the Piazza. The crowd is wonderfully good-tempered, quiet,

Things Seen in Venice

and decorous. Two or three ladies together can walk about in mask and domino without the slightest risk of annoyance, and not a few do so, seeking out their friends, speaking in squeaky, assumed voices, and showing as much acquaintance as possible with their victims' little weaknesses. Supper parties are held in the restaurants; friends meet and smoke in the cafés on the Piazza, and about eleven the *reglione* begins at one of the theatres. Venetian ladies do not as a rule attend this masked ball, unless perhaps a party is made up for a "sprea," and then they are spectators rather than dancers. On the other hand, the Cavalchina—the *bal masqué* held at the Fenice (the Venetian Opera House) on one of the last nights of carnival—is always under patrician patronage. It is for *beneficenza*, the proceeds being divided among the principal charitable institutions of the city. Individuals and trading companies offer prizes for the best costumes; the owners of boxes relinquish their rights in them for the night, and they are re-sold for fancy prices by the managing committee. The spectacle as viewed from the boxes is very diverting, though greatly





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TWO VOTIVE CHURCHES SEEN FROM THE TOP OF THE CAMPANILE

In the middle distance, S. Maria della Salute; facing it, on the distant Giudecca, the "Redentore." A bridge of boats unites these two churches on the Feast of the Redentore.

Fasts and Festivals

marred by the licence allowed to male dancers to appear in ugly modern morning dress—not even in *frac*—and to walk about in bowler hats. Such a false note in the spectacle jars the more because of the dainty loveliness of the background. The Fenice cannot compare in size or magnificence with the Scala at Milan, or S. Carlo at Naples, but its unaltered eighteenth-century decorations give it a peculiar *cachet* of its own. Even on an ordinary opera night one feels that powdered heads and patched faces ought to look forth from the boxes, and that when a door opens at the back to admit a visitor, one should catch a glimpse of periwig, cocked hat, and sword. During the carnival of 1907 one was able to realize the aspect of the house in the days of its glory, for, as part of the celebration of the Goldoni Bicentenary, it was decided that fancy dresses at the Cavalcina should all be of the Goldoni period, and that even non-dancers should appear *poudrées*.

Dancers with a box use it as a sort of private sitting-out room, into which, however, their masked acquaintance are apt to intrude. Sometimes the visitor uses his disguise to pay off old

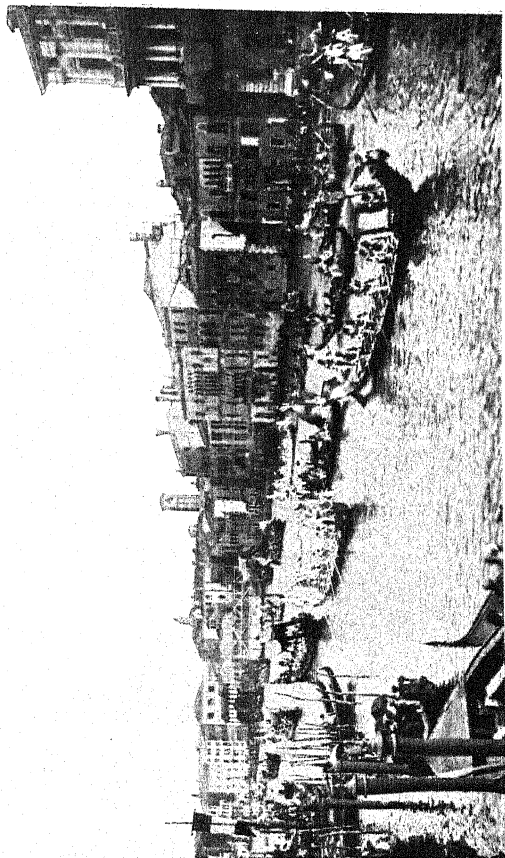
Things Seen in Venice

after the relics have been solemnly exposed, blesses the kneeling worshippers.

The procession of *Corpus Domini* in modern Venice cannot compare either with its former self, or with similar processions in other parts of Italy, notably in Bologna. Its route is curtailed as much as possible, and it barely appears outside the walls of St. Mark's. We must stand before the picture of Gentile Bellini in the Accademia to realize its sometime glory as it traversed the Piazza in the golden June sunshine.

More characteristic is the simple *Corpus Domini* procession at Murano, repeated on the following Sunday; while that at Burano, rarely witnessed by foreigners, is yet more primitive and spontaneous. It takes place late in the afternoon, for these poor fisherfolk cannot afford to keep holiday at an early hour; it makes the tour of the island, and it is composed of almost the entire population.

They are a fine race, these "Buranei" and "Buranelle," and the children are delightful. The trappings of the show may be worn and tawdry, child-angels may be vested in coarse lace



Topical Press.

A GALA PROCESSION ON THE GRAND CANAL.

Fasts and Festivals

curtains, and the little St. John Baptist wear a mangy sheepskin; but the grace of childhood and the sweet dignity of adoring motherhood are as the old Venetian painters saw and fixed them in picture after picture of the Madonna and Child, and worshipping *puttini*. And always the atmosphere of the Lagoons plays its tricks of transformation, so that the procession filing across a bridge, or spreading itself into a group about a temporary altar on the line of route, becomes a picture never to be forgotten.

One of the very few processions now allowed to traverse the streets of Venice takes place on June 13, the day of S. Antonio. It forms in the Piazza about ten a.m., and is composed not only of the patriarchal canons and functionaries of S. Marco, but also of the parochial clergy, each wearing a different coloured stole, which gives the procession a curious striped effect. It passes to the church of the Salute, across a bridge of boats thrown over the Grand Canal, and appears, seen from the surrounding windows, as a streak of glowing colour with banners fluttering in the sea-breeze.

Once again in the year is the Salute ap-

Things Seen in Venice

proached by a pontoon, and visited in state by the Patriarch, the Canons of St. Mark's, and all the *parocchi* of Venice.

In 1631 the plague, which had raged for sixteen months in Venice and the adjacent islands, was suddenly arrested; whereupon the Doge, Council, Senate, nobles, and clergy went in solemn procession from St. Mark's to a wooden church hastily erected on a piece of land given to the Republic by the Knights Templars, and there offered the city's solemn thanks given to "Mary the Mother of Health." In due time Baldassare Longhena, who obtained the order by open competition, erected the structure so audacious, yet so strangely graceful, which delights our eyes as we enter the Grand Canal. And year by year, on November 21, Venice renews its thanksgiving, and implores the continued protection to the "Madonna della Salute." Most Venetians—even those not "practising" (*non pratticanti*)—as a rule, visit the church that day; and very early in the morning dwellers in its vicinity are awakened by the tramp, tramp of feet on the wooden structure of the bridge. At the church



Photo

Ballance, St. Moritz.

A SIDE-CANAL.

Characteristic glimpse, showing a *barca* rowed by two men.

Fasts and Festivals

door the devout purchase tapers, light them, and pass them over the sanctuary rails to the sacristan, till the figure of the Madonna above the High-Altar is illuminated with thousands of flickering candles. His candle delivered and his prayer said, the average Venetian pays little further heed to the Low or High Mass at which he is nominally assisting. Presently he will move towards the door, and inspect the booths erected in the big open space round the church, where are sold rosaries and little statuettes of saints and pictures of the Madonna, as well as more mundane goods, such as *galetti* made of flour, lard, and white of egg, candied fruits strung on straws, and other cheap dainties.

The gondoliers of the *traghetto* of S. Gregorio receive three francs apiece for the day as compensation for the loss suffered by them by the making of a footway across the Canalazzo.

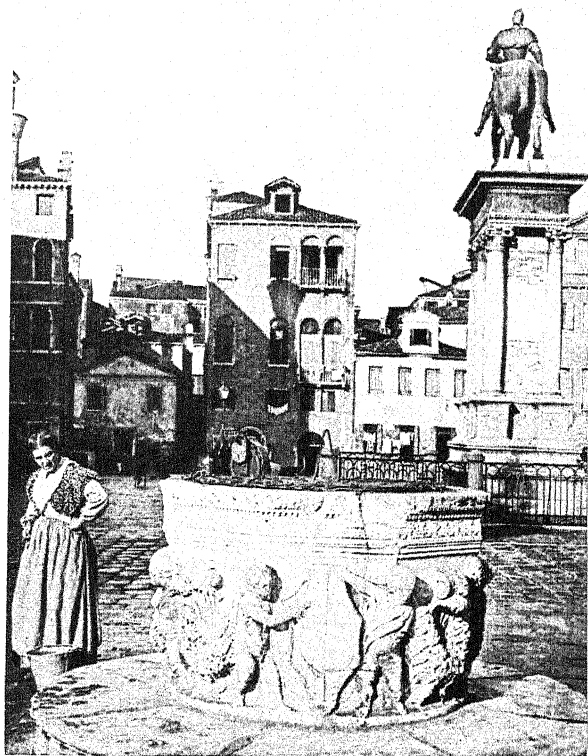
Three times in the year is the canal thus bridged: on June 13, November 21, and the third Sunday in July. On this last occasion, however, the bridge to the Salute is merely an avenue to the far longer pontoon stretched

Things Seen in Venice

across the wide canal of the Giudecca to the church of the Redentore. This is another votive church, built to commemorate the cessation of another plague.

The *fiesta*, from 1577 to the present day, has been an immensely popular one. The evening of the Redentore is talked about and saved for months beforehand; there are few families that do not manage to hire a boat, provide a supper, and spend the evening on the water. It is pleasant to see them seated round a table placed in some large old *barca*, adorned with lanterns and green boughs, eating a frugal meal and prolonging the enjoyment of their red wine.

The crowd of boats of all descriptions is extraordinary and rather alarming. It is wise to take two gondoliers, and wonderful to watch the dexterity with which they steer their course and avoid accidents. Everyone is "on pleasure bent," and infectious, and, on the whole, harmless, hilarity prevails. A band plays on the Giudecca, and fireworks—always entrancing in Venice—are let off at midnight. Then, if the night is fine, the Venetian rows out to the

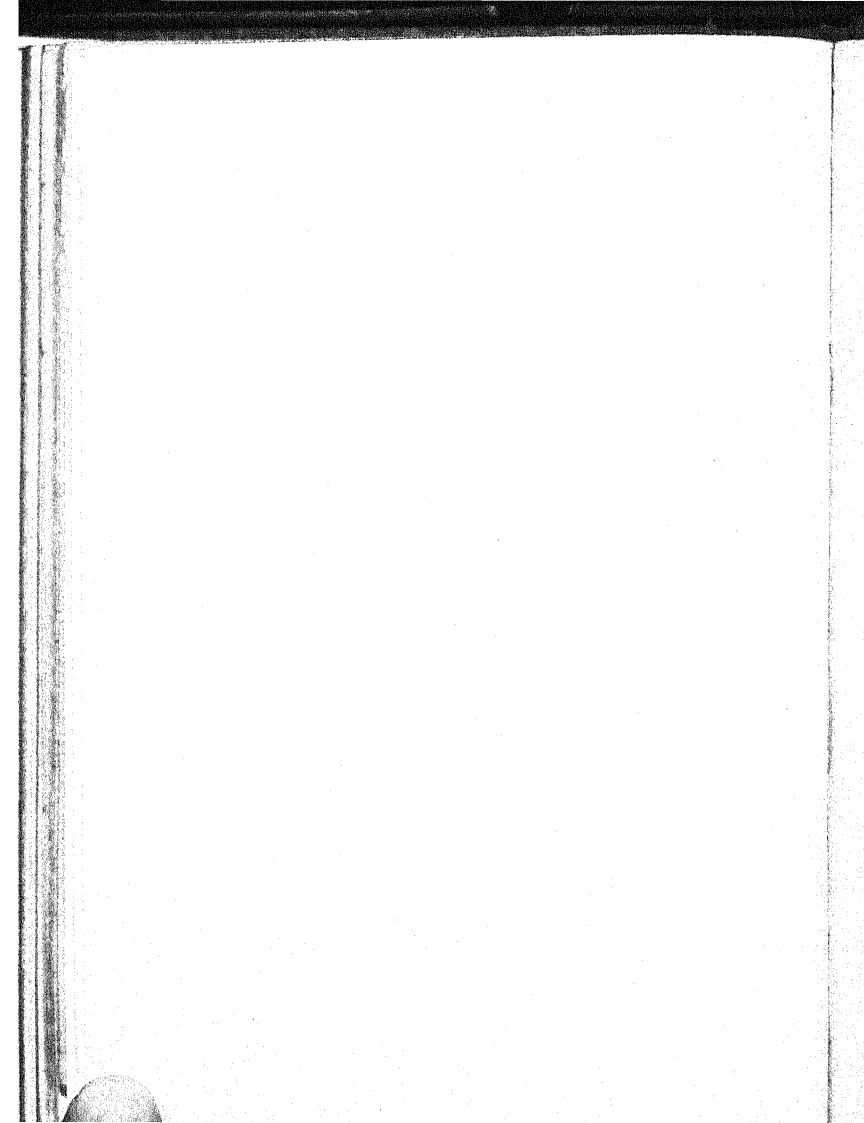


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A WELL-HEAD.

From these wells, filled from water-boats, Venice used to be served with water. To the right is the famous statue of Colleoni.



Fasts and Festivals

Lido, where he greets the rising sun, and dips in the cool, sun-kissed waves.

A preceding chapter has dealt with the regattas, State entries, illuminations, and serenatas, of which the Canalazzo is the scene. But another sort of procession may sometimes be seen crossing it to cut into one or other of the canals which run eastward towards the Fondamente Nuove.

None of the new and strange "things seen in Venice" have ever impressed me with this city's unlikeness to the mainland so much as the spectacle of one of these funerals streaming out towards the island of S. Michele, where the dead are laid to rest in the black ooze.

Whereas in other places the hearse is melancholy, and the attendant carriages have little about them distinctively funereal, in Venice it is the long train of gondolas with their black *felze*, rowed by gondoliers in black scarves and sashes, which sounds the note of mourning, while the barque bearing the coffin, which is often heaped with flowers, seems to bound forward almost with an air of triumph. There are three grades of funerals at corresponding

Things Seen in Venice

prices, and one could wish that the first-class barque were not adorned with a golden Lion of St. Mark weeping into a golden handkerchief. Still, if the decoration is ridiculous, it is not lugubrious, and the passage over the breezy space of the Lagoon in brilliant sunshine, or on one of these grey languid days when rest seems the *summum bonum* of human life, conveys suggestions and impressions far different from those provoked by the slow progress to an English cemetery.

But the time intervening between a death and an interment in Venice is peculiarly trying to the relatives of the deceased, especially if they chance to be strangers in the land. Never does the red tape of Italian bureaucracy appear more knotted and obnoxious. Sordid anxieties and irritations start up at every turn, and all kinds of official obstacles hinder the accomplishment of formalities which yet may not be omitted without incurring legal penalties.

Once a year—on November 2—the space of water which, like a sanitary cordon, parts the living from the dead, is spanned by a bridge of boats similar to that which in high summer

Fasts and Festivals

was constructed over the channel of the Giudecca. All Venice streams across it, for few there are who have no relatives or friends in S. Michele, and none who would leave them unvisited on the day dedicated to the departed. As one nears the Fondamente Nuove, a dull beating sound meets the ear, persistent as a torrent, but harsher and more irritating; and when one emerges before the open space of the Lagoon its cause is manifest: it is the sound of hundreds of thickly-shod feet upon the planks—the march of the living to the dead.

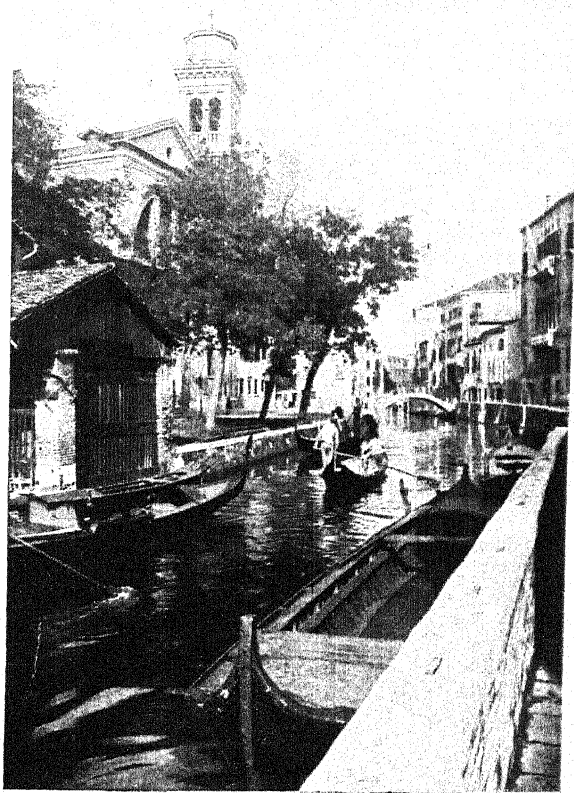
Near the entrance to the bridge are booths where flowers and tapers may be purchased, and where little meringue-like biscuits called *fave* are sold. They are variously flavoured and gaily coloured, and are the confectioner's substitute for the true beans which should be eaten by every devout Venetian during the period of his *Lemuria*.

The bridge is divided—half for those who go, half for those who return. It almost makes one dizzy to watch the two black streams flowing in opposite directions. Few of the people make the pilgrimage by water, though now and then

Things Seen in Venice

I have seen a heavy boat-load of black-shawled women, rowed, perhaps, by a couple of lads. Those who go by gondola must steer for the church that rises white against the black smoke of the Murano furnaces, and must alight at the steps near the steamer pontoon, and rejoin their boat at the landing-stage hard by the temporary bridge. This is the order of the day, and is strictly enforced.

After glancing in at the dark church, where litanies are being chaunted round a black-draped catafalque, one traverses the cemetery—so different from an English burial-ground—with its cloisters and open squares, filled now with a quiet crowd, every unit of which seeks the resting-place of some loved one. Out of blurred impressions of *Giorni dei Morti* spent in Venice, comes back the vivid recollection of two little lads struggling up a bank with a wreath of pink chrysanthemums bigger than themselves. I gave them a helping hand, and they told me that mother was ill and had sent them to lay the wreath on father's grave. They were poorly dressed, and looked underfed, and I wondered what the flowers had cost.

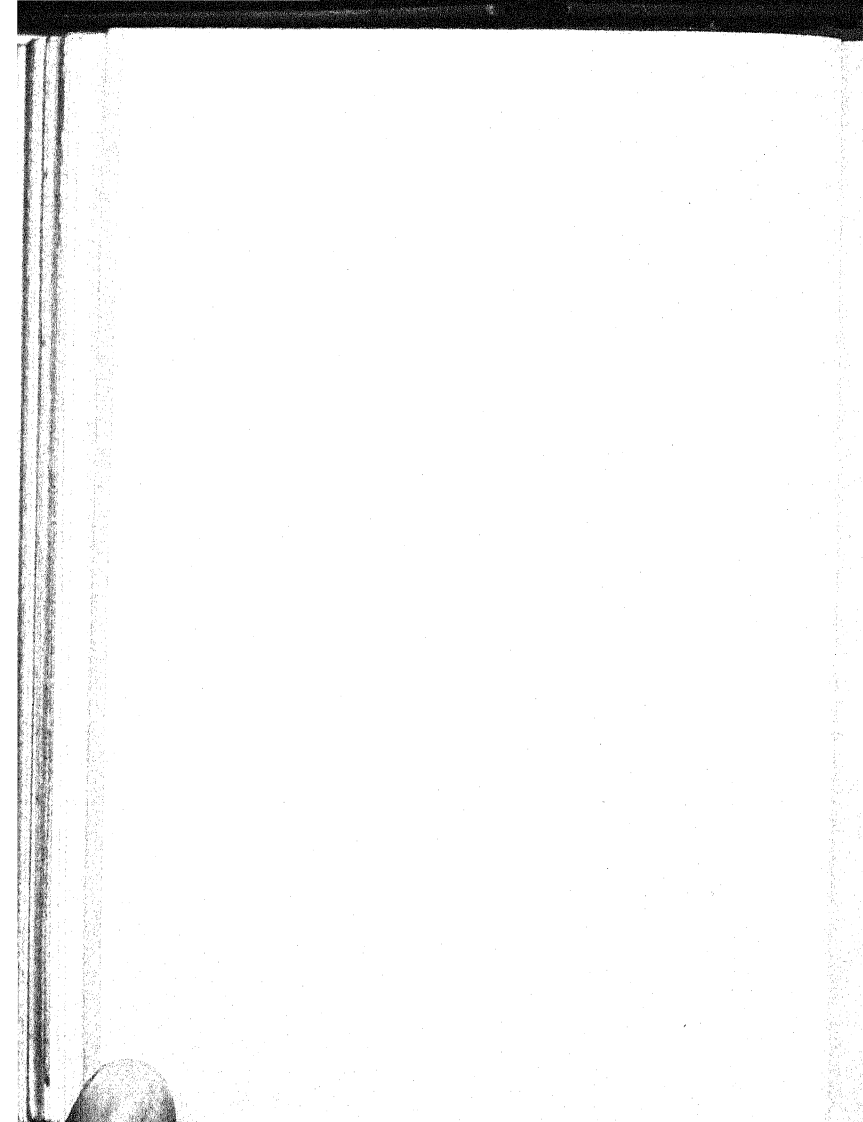


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CANAL OF S. TROVASO, A FAVOURITE POINT FOR ARTISTS.

This photograph is taken in summer, the other (on p. 140) in winter.



Fasts and Festivals

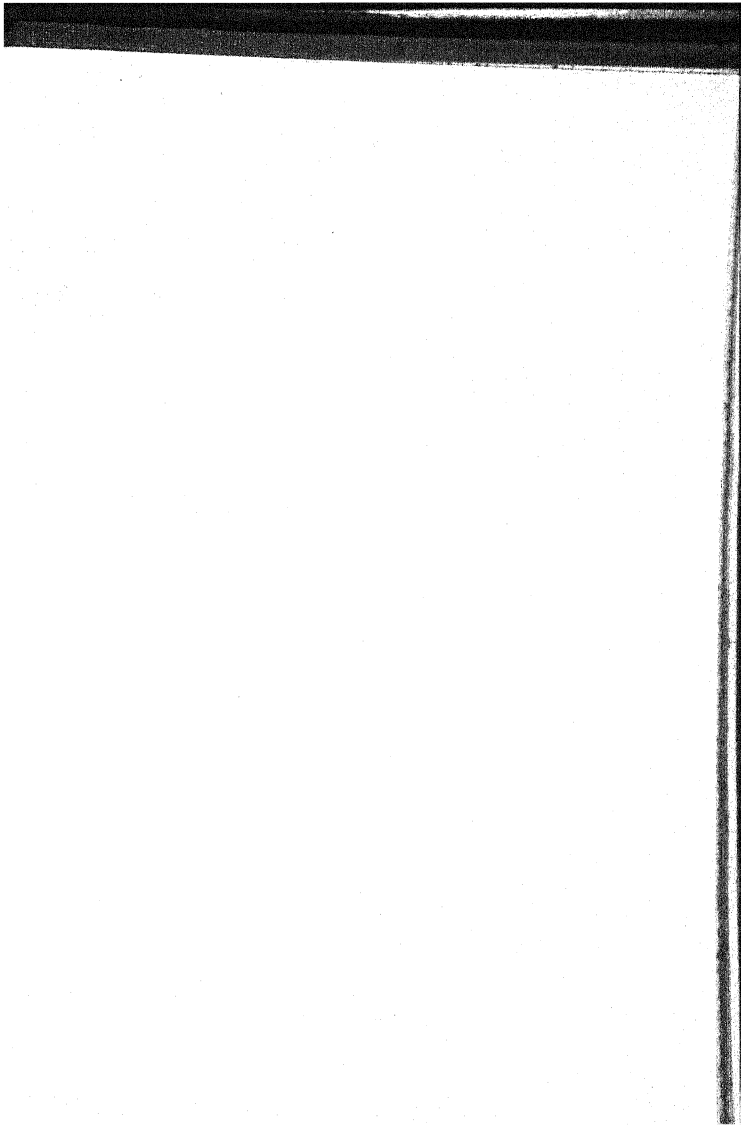
There remains with me also as an indelible picture the figure of a young woman with the rare Titian red hair, kneeling in the children's portion to the cemetery beside a little grave. She held an infant in her arms, and clutched it to her heart with streaming eyes, as who should say: "I will not let this one go!"

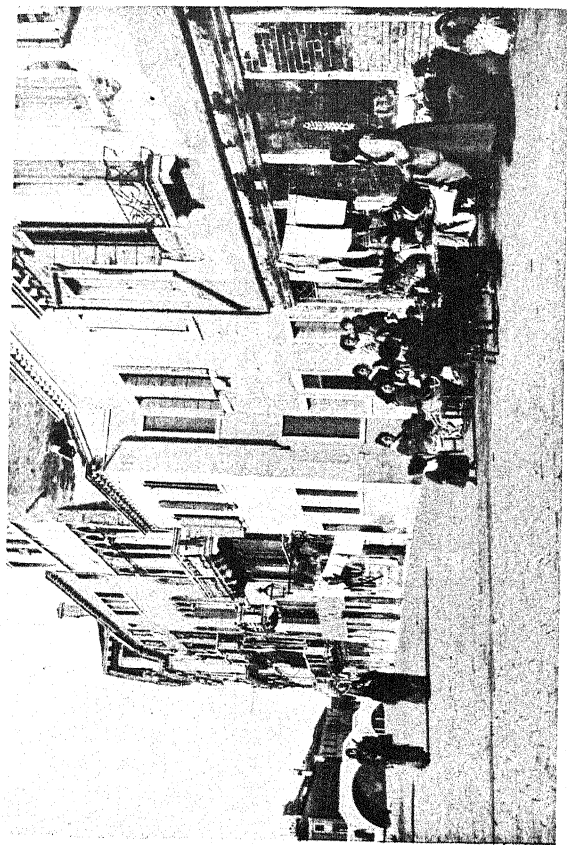
It had been a soft but sunless day, and now the light was waning and the breeze freshening: I saw her bent, black-shawled figure silhouetted against a saffron streak which separated the steel-grey of the water from the pearl-grey of the sky. And all about her were the pale, flickering flames of tapers burning on the graves—fit emblems of the frailty of human lives.

CHAPTER VII

VARIA

THE soul of a city ! How distinctly it manifests itself to our spirit and our senses, yet how difficult it is to convey an impression of its intangible, impalpable essence ! If we were set down asleep in a street in Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan, we should know to which city we had been transplanted before our eyes had been opened five minutes ; but if we were spirited to Venice, we should know it, I think, before we were well awake. Those who live long there even feel a subtle difference between the different *sestieri* of the city. The stream of passengers across a bridge—they always seem like walking figures on a stage—the gestures of loiterers by a fruit-stall, the physiognomy of young mothers with infants in their arms, or of children playing in seemingly dangerous proximity to a canal, the arrangement, even the





A BROAD "FONDAMENTA,"
With characteristic Venetian shop.

Topical Press.

Varia

odour, of the shops are not quite the same in Cannareggio as in Dorsoduro, in S. Polo as in Castello.

Every *campo* has its own group of shops within it, or in an adjacent *calle*, which supplies the neighbourhood with all the necessities of life. And first, as a social centre, a place where a coterie of intimates drop in and talk, and glance through the halfpenny paper of the day, is the *farmacia*, the chemist's.* It is usually a decidedly attractive place, neat and bare, with its few patent medicines locked away in cupboards, and its shelves decorated with long rows of lovely faience jars, some of them plain blue and white, others decorated in delicate coloured designs. They are more artistic symbols of the trade than Rosamond's Purple Jar, and are—or were—useful as well as orna-

* Two or three points about Italian dispensing are worth noting. No patent medicine may be sold unless its ingredients are published on the cover. To every preparation sent out a label must be fixed on which the physician's prescription is transcribed. Powders are taken in wafers (*cialdi*), easily swallowed when wetted. The taste of the medicament is disguised, and it is more easily assimilated and cheaply dispensed than in pill or tabloid form.

Things Seen in Venice

mental. Nowadays, however, they are apt to stand empty; partly because they are too valuable for daily handling—collectors give high prices for them when they come into the market; partly because Dame Fashion contrives to rule the physician almost as much as the dressmaker, and the drugs which cured our forefathers are now *démodés*. Thus the jar bearing as part of its design the name *triacca* must needs remain unfilled, though the city was once famous for this compound, manufactured publicly, on a fixed day in the year, with extraordinary solemnities. We have it on Bacon's authority that "Venice Treacle" was one of the few medicaments of his time which was mixed according to established and unvarying formulæ.

The inexperienced foreigner is apt to think that the word *drogheria* painted over a shop is a synonym for chemist; but if, instead, he see the word *spezier*, or *spezieri*—and there are not a few *calli* in Venice called "Del Spezier"—he will easily realize its identity with the French *épiciér*. Originally, indeed, the chemists (*farmacisti*) and the *droghieri*, or





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THE RIALTO.

The neighbourhood of Venice's best and cheapest markets.

Varia

spezieri, represented two branches of the same trade, and formed a single confraternity. But while the former were scattered over the city, the dealers in spices and olive-oil, and manufacturers and retailers of sugar and candles, abode chiefly in the street between the Church of S. Salvatore and the Rialto Bridge, called after them "*Spezieria*"; and gradually the *farmacisti* and *spezieri* drew apart and formed two separate guilds.

Retail trade to-day tends towards concentration rather than towards differentiation; but in Venice, which lags behind the hurrying world beyond the lagoons, old trade divisions are maintained. Only in the vicinity of St. Mark's is anything found approaching to the modern comprehensive grocery store; and the confectioner, baker, and maker of *pasta* are three distinct entities.

The baker produces a pleasing variety of bread. There is bread made with milk and with oil (in dialect *col ogio*); there are long loaves of coarse texture and "standard" hue; little breads known as *busolai* or *pane veneziano*, twisted into odd hard shapes,

Things Seen in Venice

powdery in texture, white, hard, and unnourishing, yet somehow very pleasant to soak in soup or coffee. And in the better-class shops there is *pane francese*, made into the usual French shapes of roll and crescent; and the long, hard sticks so nice to nibble between the courses of luncheon or dinner which are called *gressini*, and are the invention of the bakers of Turin.

The antiquity dealers and their wares are great features of Venice. They are of various grades and pretensions, and the best "finds" may often be made in the abodes of the humblest; though the obscure man, having no particular reputation to lose, must be handled with caution. Of course the demand for genuine antiques far exceeds the supply, and, in consequence, imitation has become a fine art. Moreover, really old pieces of furniture are apt to be exceedingly rough compared with French and English work of the same date; partly, perhaps, because the best specimens of the cabinet-maker's craft remain in the palaces for which they were made, or have long since been taken out of Italy.

Further, what looks magnificent in the large

Varia

spaces of an Italian *palazzo*, in sunlight glancing off the water, and broken and reflected by marble architraves, gilded beams and clouded Venetian mirrors, has quite a different effect in a moderate-sized English drawing-room beside Chippendale and flowered chintz. The rococo gilded consoles and settees, and the painted cabinets and commodes, with their delicate landscapes and gay figures and flowers, are particularly ill adapted for transplantation to Northern climes. I once heard of an English painter who, revelling in the glorious colour and quaint designs of the sails of Venetian fishing-smacks, took pains to purchase one and have it sent to London. He hung it up on the wall of his studio ; he found it dead, colourless, and uninteresting.

This is a story with a moral for those who would take home curios from Venice. It must be owned, however, that to wander through an antiquario's room, and examine and appraise its contents, is a fascinating pursuit for a wet day, but the inexperienced traveller would do well to secure the company of an Italian friend. At all events, he should never trust to the chartered

Things Seen in Venice

recommendation of his gondolier, or be induced to pay half the price of goods which are to be shipped home. A small sum may justly be demanded as *caparra*, or earnest-money—an evidence of good faith; the price of any big purchase might be left with the English Consul or with a respectable hotel-keeper, to be delivered as soon as notice is received of the arrival of the goods in England.

Even the smartest milliners, dressmakers, and haberdashers trade under conditions which seem curiously difficult measured by modern standards of commercial comfort. Other cities have advanced, Venice is unchanged. To Evelyn and other travellers of bygone days the Merceria seemed one of the gayest and sweetest streets in the world. The twentieth-century visitor admires its picturesque windings, but finds its shops irritatingly dark and incommodious, and certainly does not praise it for being "exceedingly cleane, and pav'd with brick." Yet we can well believe that seventeenth-century Venice must have been extraordinarily agreeable and sanitary compared with other cities of the epoch, since no animals wandered about the



Photo

Ballance, St. Moritz.

A SIDE-CANAL, ONE OF VENICE'S NARROWEST WATERWAYS.

Observe the elaborate wrought-iron work to the left.

Varia

streets, and refuse, instead of lying festering outside the houses, was thrown into the canals, and twice a day carried by the tide out to sea.

There is one advantage about Venetian shops: they have no sales! A few articles may be marked *Occasione*, or a departing tradesman will put the placard *Liquidazione* in his windows; but the feverish excitement of London in January and June would accord ill with the Venetian temperament. Great frugality in the matter of paper and *cartons* is practised. Newspaper is largely used for making parcels, and the little girls—they generally come in couples—who bring home a hat are instructed to wait in the hall for the box. A first-rate dressmaker sends a delicate gown enveloped, not in soft paper, but in a white wrapper, and the porter waits for the wrapper and the box, as well as for the expected *mancia* of twenty or thirty centesimi.

Gloves are usually bought at the maker's, and are good and inexpensive. Anybody wanting a peculiar cut or shade of quality can have them made to his taste. In this, as in so much else, Italian, and especially Venetian, retail trade harks back to ancient types.

Things Seen in Venice

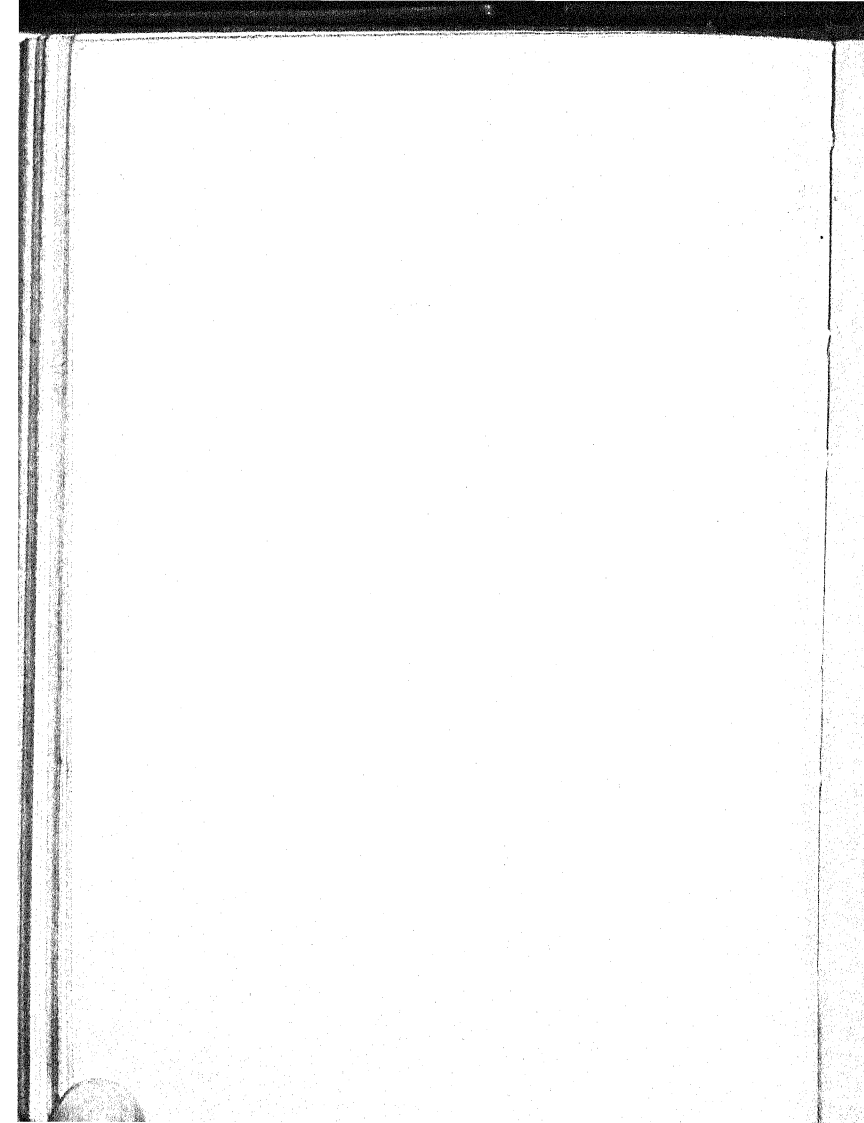
Akin to the *guantiere*, or glove-maker, is the worker in leather. All sorts of articles are made, and books are elaborately bound in embossed, coloured, and gilded leather.

An industry peculiar to Venice is represented in the bead-shop, which is a sort of by-product of the glass factory. It is a strangely seductive place, and whoever enters it feels impelled to purchase girdles and necklaces, bags and hatpins, not to speak of strings of beads of many hues and shapes for home-threading. Who wears the beads bought in Venice is a dark mystery to me. Perhaps it is a part of the bigger problem, what becomes of things sold at bazaars. For "a bazaar at home" is an excuse for much bead-buying and much worrying of the Anglo-American colony in Venice. I once knew a busy Englishwoman who was asked by a slight acquaintance in England to send her a hundred hatpins, *all different, by return of post!* Bead-stringing is an occupation which augments the income of many a Venetian woman. It is not very lucrative, but it demands little intelligence or skill, and can be practised under agreeable condi-



Topical Press.

THE MILK BOAT.



Varia

tions. All through the summer visitors to Venice are familiar with the sight of women seated outside their doors with trays of beads on their knees, and in their hands the long pierced wires which so greatly facilitate the work of stringing.

A good deal of lace-making and embroidery is now done as home work; the greater and better portion, however, is produced in lace schools attached to the large lace emporiums. The long room, with its lines of figures, many of them graceful and girlish, bending over frames, is a scene worthy of an artist's study. Venetian women, in spite of painters' encomiums, are really far less beautiful than those of many other parts of Italy, notably than their near relatives in the hill-country of the Veneto. But they carry themselves well, and the mere absence of ugly hats and ill-fitting coats is an immense gain to their appearance, and, incidentally, to that of streets and *campi* through which they move. Their heavy, black, fringed shawls are expensive to purchase, but last for years, and, like the Spanish mantilla, lend grace and distinction to the wearer. Un-

Things Seen in Venice

like the mantilla, however, they are not worn on the head, save, perhaps, during a sudden storm. Summer and winter the woman of the Venetian *popolo* goes uncovered on scorching days, sheltering her well-dressed head with a parasol. Whether this custom proceeds from vanity or from economy, and the beauty of Venetian hair be a cause or an effect, is a problem which, from the nature of women, cannot be satisfactorily determined.

Certain it is that hair-dressing is a fine art with them; they perform the office of coiffeuse for each other, and on special occasions seek professional skill. But their belief that long hair is a glory induces habits contrary to the precepts of St. Paul. They are devout, in a certain careless fashion; they rarely go out to their morning's work or marketing without entering a church. And since the obligation of dressing in one's best for worship, which is so inimical to week-day church-going with the English poor, never enters the mind of an Italian, it follows that the Venetian woman prays, as she labours, uncovered. The habit is the more curious because in bygone days Vene-

Varia

tian maidens of all but the poorest families went veiled as in the East, and the ideas of the *popolino* regarding the seclusion and subjection of women have still an Eastern tinge. Those who are interested in the homes and customs and etiquette of the people are advised to read the chapter on home life in Mr. Horatio Brown's "Life on the Lagoons."

Even the casual visitor to Venice, if he hire a gondola by the week, may see one Venetian interior. The gondolier is generally pleased to show his modest home, his wife, his mother, and some pretty children, and is especially proud of his neat bedroom, with its whitewashed walls adorned only with some cheap coloured pictures of saints, its walnut furniture and excellent wooden beds—iron bedsteads are little accounted of in these circles. But the visitors will probably wax more enthusiastic over the kitchen, with its pretty flowered plates, its really splendid *secchie*, and other copper pans and brass utensils, kept bright, not with pernicious polishes, but with sand, lemon-juice, and a great deal of elbow grease. These *secchie* are no longer to be found in every Venetian kitchen, for now

Things Seen in Venice

that water from the aqueduct is laid on to all the larger houses, big receptacles for fetching and keeping well-water are no longer in demand.

The picturesque but unwholesome days when Venice depended on springs that were generally brackish, and when great skins of sweet water were rowed over the Lagoon from the Brenta and hawked through the streets, are almost forgotten now that every *palazzo* and the well of every *campo* are supplied from the hill-country near Bassano with water delicious to the taste, and cool in the hottest summer.

Venice has good milk as well as good water, the product of the pastures of the near mainland. One large landowner has depots in several quarters of the city, and his milk can be bought sterilized, in sealed bottles.

Meat is not very good, and looks particularly untempting in a dark shop in a dirty *calle*. Happily, the butchers always close at midday.

Poultry is indifferent and dear, especially when the bidding is against the purveyors to the big hotels ; but at certain seasons excellent wild-fowl from the salt marshes can be obtained.

Varia

Fish is as good as in the days when Madame Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale) praised it. The Adriatic is, in this respect, very unlike the Mediterranean, and there are several species peculiar to its upper reaches, which have quaint names and nice flavours. Especially good are mullet (*triglia*), a fleshy fish called *coda di rospo* (literally, "toad's tail"), and a kind of enlarged prawn called *scampo*. *Scampi* are usually served as a *contorno* (garniture) to other boiled fish. The fish is always fresh; the supply tends to be less than the demand, and the best fish is not sent off by train, as in English fishing towns, nor is it kept on ice in fish-mongers' shops. The cook buys in the fish-market, or from some hawker who has himself been there betimes; and sometimes after rough weather in Lent, a late comer will find the stalls as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. The picturesque little fish-market in Campiello Pescaria of the Riva degli Schiavoni, and the large one at the Rialto, are well worth a visit on a fine morning, while the *erberia*—fruit and vegetable quay—in front of the old buildings of Rialto, should be seen late in the afternoon,

Things Seen in Venice

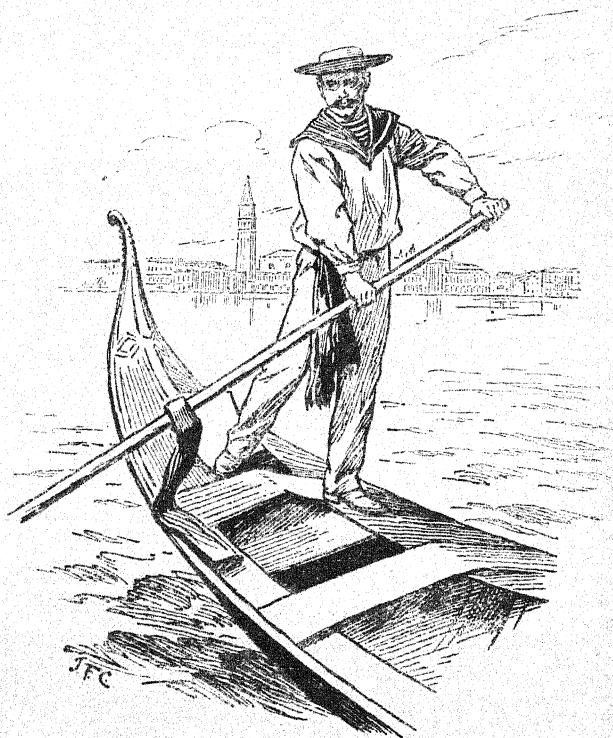
when the barges arrive from the mainland to deposit their green freights.

It is, of course, on account of this transport from afar and the *dazio* (impost) exacted on all food-stuffs brought into the city, that fruit, flowers, and vegetables are less cheap and plentiful in Venice than in other Italian towns. While of the things accounted necessities of life—corn, wine, and oil—wine alone is cheap in Venice. Oil is dear, since it is imported from Southern Italy, the climate of the Veneto being too vigorous for olives. The poorest classes buy bread very sparingly; their farinaceous food chiefly takes the shape of *polenta*—a solid porridge of maize flour, turned out on one rounded wooden board and flattened with another—which is eaten in great chunks, hot or cold. This *polenta*, with a little fried fish, or some strange molluscs and perhaps a salad, form the working-day dinner of the gondolier, his family, and his social equals, varied with rice and cabbage, or with *risi-bisi*, a *risotto* made with peas. In the evening there may be more *polenta* and soup or vegetables. Beans, hot or cold, with oil and vinegar, or made

Varia

into soup, supply the greater portion of the poor man's proteids; they are the product of the northern Veneto, and of excellent quality.

The same praise cannot be bestowed upon the wine, save that produced in certain districts—notably near Conegliano. In good years the rather sweet white wine, when new, is exceedingly pleasant, and the Englishman in Venice drinks it readily. But the Venetian, as a rule, only likes red wine, and red wine does not keep in Venice. Only at the time of vintage is the red wine of the Veneto (the best comes from the neighbourhood of Verona) really good drinking. Then the pure, fresh, garnet-coloured grape-juice may be had for fifty or sixty centimes a litre, and in exceptional years even for forty-five centimes. But this autumnal superabundance of *vino nostrano* maketh sad the heart of man dwelling in the vicinity of a wine-shop, for it leads to revelry by night. The men of the Venetian *popolo* are not tempted to solitary drinking. Even the best of wine in their opinion requires the additional flavour of conversation; and each of them has his favourite *osteria*,



A GONDOLIER

Varia

which serves him as a club. There, in a room with a stove, comfortably stuffy after the cold of their own dwellings, or in a vine-shaded yard dignified by the name of "garden," which is so much cooler than the stifling kitchen at home, the little circle of *habitués* meet day after day, and sip their wine, drive bargains and discuss the affairs of the neighbourhood—the immediate neighbourhood, that is; for the births, deaths, and marriages, failures and successes of other quarters do not concern them; they are "foreign affairs," about which no one can know much or feel strongly.

The habit of spirit-drinking is unhappily growing, favoured by the cold, raw winter climate. Workmen going forth to the day's labours on a chilly morning are apt to fortify themselves with a *bicchierino* of *grappa*—a kind of coarse brandy—which, at that early hour, is so much more quickly, easily, and cheaply procured than hot coffee. This practice cannot but undermine the constitution, especially when no food is taken till the day is old. The Venetian is wonderfully indifferent as to the hour when he breaks his fast. I have known

Things Seen in Venice

gondoliers do a hard morning's work without touching food or drink.

In conclusion, it may be well to say a few words about the climate and the health of the City of the Lagoons.

The winters are perhaps colder than in England—that is to say, the cold is more continuous, and one feels it greatly, for there is less comfort within doors; the gondola is not so warm as a brougham; rapid exercise can be got only at the Lido; and the draughty, sunless, stone-paved *calli* are infinitely more chilly than a hedge-bordered road. Venice is spared the ice and snow of Bologna (though a snowfall occasionally occurs), and the piercing, dust-laden winds of Florence; but in December and January there is often fog, and wild weather seawards which sends the gulls screaming up the Cana-lazzo. Spring comes sooner and more certainly than on the northern side of the Alps; but dwellers in Venice miss its sweet signals—the bleating of lambs and the song of nesting birds, the scent of violets, the feeling of rising sap, the surprise of opening buds.

Summer is really uninterruptedly warm.

Varia

Early in May winter clothes are put away—with every precaution against the industrious moth—and muslins and very thin tweeds or flannels become the only wear. Light overcoats and wraps should, however, be kept at hand for use during the chilly hours or days following a thunderstorm.

There are spells of uncomfortable heat which are the more trying because the difference between the night and day temperature in Venice is very slight. Still, one is well content to linger there till the Festival of St. James the Apostle (July 25), when, according to Venetian superstition and everybody's observation, the swallows seek new quarters. Then *zanzanieri* (mosquito-curtains) must be put up. For the departure of the birds who had preyed on them leaves the exasperating insects free to prey on Venice, and they fatten and multiply till autumn rains extinguish them.* But for these pests and the prevalence of the exhausting

* Mosquitoes are kept alive all the year in some of the hotels by excessive heating and a continual supply of fresh aliment. In private apartments they are rarely seen or heard before July.

Things Seen in Venice

scirocco wind, September and October would be the pleasantest, as they are certainly the loveliest, months in the Lagoon.

From questions constantly put to me, I gather that there is a general impression in this country that Venice is an extremely unhealthy city, and in summer positively pestilential. As a matter of fact, it has less illness and a smaller death-rate than most other towns of the same size; and there is, and can be, nothing especially unwholesome about the summer months. Twice a day, as we have already noticed, the fresh sea-water flows in through the "Gates" of the Lidi: twice a day it ebbs, carrying with it the refuse of the city. It does not cease to rise and fall and perform its beneficent operations in summer, nor are there any stagnant, fever-breeding waters near the city, which at that season gains in salubrity by its emptiness. The least wholesome time perhaps is spring, because the enormous concourse of tourists tends to produce insanitary conditions. Moreover, the Grand Canal—the spot where they "most do congregate"—is constantly churned up in a way un contemplated by the old Makers of

Varia

Venice, as the penny steamers ply in rapid succession to take up passengers who await them in crowds upon every pontoon.

The "smells of Venice" are, however, far less dangerous to health than the *frittura* of all kinds of little fish which are temptingly served in restaurants, and sometimes appear in the cosmopolitan menu of fashionable hotels. They are caught too near land to be safe eating; and the tourist will do well to eschew them, together with oysters, salads of uncooked vegetables, and strawberries—grown on well-manured lands, and picked and packed by dirty fingers.

But the greatest risks run by visitors to Venice are those of their own making. The brilliant sun of an Italian March or April tempts them to don the lightest summer garments, and English girls appear in cotton gowns while Venetians are still wrapped in furs. Then a gondola without covering is not the same as an open carriage. Damp, provocative of rheumatic chills, rises from the water, and the Italian sticks to the *felze* till summer has quite begun. But the stranger objects to the *felze*; he thinks

Things Seen in Venice

it stuffy—it is not so if the door be left open—and it impedes his view. The sudden chill of sunset, so sensible and so deadly on the Riviera and in Southern Italy, is indeed not felt in Venice; but the Anglo-Saxon tourist, who, after a warm and tiring day, emerges at night from the heated atmosphere of the hotel dining-room, and goes forth in gondola without cover, and with very insufficient overcoats and wraps, certainly does his best to court sickness. I can only add that if he succeeds in his wooing, he will find very comfortable quarters in the English Nursing Home on the Giudecca.

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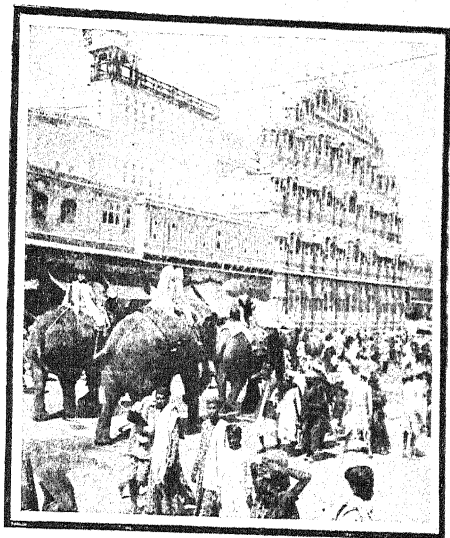
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